US identifies terrorists whose assets RP must freeze

Story on Page A2

Iggy gets brickbats from election rival

By Carlos Pablo

JOSE Pidal, aka Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo, is gunning for a seat in Congress.

That should really be Arroyo, aka Pidal. But the incumbent he is challenging, Rep. Jose Apolonario Lacson of Negros Occiden-

IGGY A3

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Reds to earn P2.25B in poll fees, says AFP

By Christian V. Esguerra and Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

COMMUNIST rebels could raise at least P2.25 billion during the election season if they are not stopped from exacting "permit-to-campaign" (PTC) fees from candidates in rebel-controlled areas nationwide, the military said yesterday.

Col. Eduardo del Rosario, head of the Army's Civil Affairs Group, said

REDS A9

SADDAM CAPTURED

Ople dies in Taiwan; 76

Suffers from heart attack during flight

By Jerome Aning

FOREIGN Secretary Blas F. Ople, a passionate nationalist who became a key ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo in her unflinching support for the US-led war on terror, died from a heart attack yesterday morning in Taiwan. He was 76.

Ople, a workaholic and chain smoker despite suffering from a lung disease, had difficulty breathing and then lost consciousness on Saturday night while on board a Japan Asia Airways flight from Tokyo to Bangkok, Foreign Undersecretary Franklin Eduldo said.

The plane immediately declared a medical emergency and landed at the Chiang Kai-shek International Airport at about 10:00 p.m. Ople was rushed to the Mandaeng General Hospital in Taoyuan county, east of Taipei.

Carlos Sorreta, Ople's assistant, said the foreign secretary died at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday after efforts to revive him failed.

Sorreta said Ople's wife Susana and other family members were in Taiwan to arrange for the return of the foreign secretary's body to Manila on Sunday night.

"The nation mourns the death of a great Filipino," Ms Macapagal, who was visiting Hong Kong, said in a statement. "We were saved by the vision and indomitable will of Secretary Blas Ople. He was an architect of Philippine foreign policy in the finest tradition of enlightened and pragmatic diplomacy."

"We will miss him and the world will miss him," she added.

Employees at the Department of Foreign Affairs wept quietly as Eduldo, foreign undersecretary in charge of policy, announced Ople's death. Eduldo was designated acting foreign secretary until a replacement for Ople is found.

Ople was in Tokyo to accompany Ms Macapagal during the

OPLE A10

OPLE: Nationalist, workaholic and chain smoker. KYODO

From colorful journalist to political chameleon

THE PHILIPPINES yesterday mourned the sudden death of foreign Secretary Blas F. Ople, a political chameleon who backed the dictator Ferdinand Marcos but later championed democracy after Marcos' ouster in the 1986 "People Power" Revolution.

A lively figure who loved a drink and a smoke, Ople first made his mark as US-fighting Japanese during World War II and espoused nationalist causes in his youth.

Toward the end of his life, he was viewed as a chief supporter of America's war on terror, its war in Iraq, and the deployment of US troops in Sunni-dawn Mindanao. He also advocated a strong partnership between Manila and Washington in military and economic affairs.

As a labor minister during the dictatorial rule of Marcos, Ople framed the country's labor code and worked to promote labor rights.

During his stint in the Senate in the 1990s, however, he became a proponent of trade liber-

OPLE EDITORIAL A20

Ex-Iraqi president falls near Tikrit

BAGHDAD—American forces captured a bearded Saddam Hussein, hiding in a hole in a farmhouse cellar near his hometown of Tikrit, the US military announced Sunday.

The arrest was carried out without a shot being fired and was a victory for the US-led coalition eight months after the fall of Baghdad.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we got him," said US administrator L. Paul Bremer at a news conference, adding: "The tyrant is a prisoner."

Bremer said Saddam was captured Saturday at 8:30 p.m. in the town of Dour, 15 km south of Tikrit, ending one of the most intense manhunts in history.

The top US military commander in Iraq, who saw Saddam overnight, said the deposed leader "has been cooperative and is talkative." He described Saddam as "a tired man, a man resigned to his fate."

In the capital, radio stations played celebratory music, motorists fired small arms in the air in celebration and passengers on buses and trucks shouted, "They got Saddam! They got Saddam!"

At the news conference announcing his capture, US forces aired a video showing a bearded Saddam being examined by a doctor who held his mouth open with a tongue depressor, apparently to get a DNA sample. They then showed a photograph of Saddam after he was shaved.

Iraqi journalists in the audience stood, pointed and shouted "Death to Saddam!" and "Down with Saddam!"

The former Iraqi leader was being held at an undisclosed loca-

SADDAM: Heavily bearded, he was caught by US forces and Kurdish fighters.

tion, said the top US military officer in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. He added that US authorities had yet to determine whether to hand him over to a new Iraqi tribunal for trial.

"This success brings closure to the Iraqi people," Sanchez said.

"Saddam Hussein will never return to a position of power from which he can punish, terrorize, intimidate and exploit the Iraqi people as he did for more than 25 years."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair welcomed the capture.

"This is very good news for the people of Iraq. It removes the shadow that has been hanging over them for too long of the nightmare of a return to the Saddam regime," he said in a statement released by his office.

Forces from the 4th Infantry Division along with Special Forces captured Saddam, the US military said. There were no injuries in the raid, called "Opera-

SADDAM A10

Popularity neither policy nor program

By Amando Doronila

FROM THE Financial Times of London (Dec. 11, 2003), we have news that Arnold Schwarzenegger, former box-office actor, is sinking deeper into Californian's quicksand deficit, barely a month after sweeping the election as governor by a landslide.

California is "heading for a meltdown unless action is taken" to balance the budget, FT reported. Moody's Investors Service, a top-credit rating agency, had downgraded almost $40 billion worth of Californian bonds by a notch, "raising the pressure for a solution to the state's budget woes."

The recent move by Schwarzenegger, a Republican, to cut vehicle license fees, said the report, had raised the general fund's expected end-shortfall through to June 2005 from $22 billion to $23.5 billion. Representatives of Moody's were in Manila recently to review the country's credit rating.

It will be recalled that weeks earlier after actor Fernando Poe Jr. announced his intention to stand for president in next year's elections and after Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho resigned from the Cabinet, Moody's warned of a downgrading of the Philippines' credit rating because of uncertainties over curbing Philippine fiscal deficits and the nation's economic direction beyond 2004. This uncertainty stemmed from widespread perception of Poe's competence to tackle complex economic prob-

ANALYSIS

POPULARITY A11

Comelec validates registration of 9M voters

By Blanche S. Rivera and Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ONLY ABOUT a fifth of the country's 43 million registered voters validated their registration for the government's election modernization program, the Commission on Elections said yesterday.

The Comelec said voters whose registrations were not validated would still be allowed to vote in the May 14 elections, but they could be questioned by the election officer before they are given the ballots.

For the filing of candidacies, which starts today, the Comelec is expecting 450,000 national and local candidates to

The poll body will be accepting certificates of candidacy until Jan. 2 for the coming elections.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said some 9 million voters made it to the deadline for validation on Friday, bringing the total number of validated registrants and new voters to 14 million.

Abalos said he was "happy" with the results of the validation, which ran from Aug. 4 to Dec. 12, because it came close to the Comelec target of 20 million to 25 million validated voters.

All registered voters were asked to go to their barangays and have their photos taken digitally, along with their signa-

COMELEC A4

WORKING VISIT! President Macapagal is greeted by a crowd of mostly live-in maids as she arrives at a convention center where she delivered a speech to Filipino workers in Hong Kong.

GMA woos OFW vote in Hong Kong trip

HONG KONG—Courting migrant Filipino workers who can now vote from abroad, President Macapagal-Arroyo pressed the flesh and handed out raffle prizes yesterday while telling a crowd of mostly live-in maids she still had much to do for them.

Ms Macapagal's brief appearance—at a hall decked with banners and packed with an estimated 5,000 people waving Philippine flags—had the trappings of a national presidential campaign going global.

"I've been working across continents to bring the message of Filipino pride and pride in the Filipinos' bright future," said the President, who arrived here fresh from a trade mission to Japan. She said she intended to improve her government's performance domestically and abroad "to uplift the lives of our people."

The President's trip was officially described as a "working vis-

it to Hong Kong," but critics charged it was really politicking at taxpayer expense, staged before campaigning officially got under way on Feb. 10 for the May elections.

Overseas workers are crucial to the Philippine economy, sending home hard currency that supports millions of people, but it remains unclear whether they'll be a big factor in the presidential election.

Many of the workers are scattered around Asia and the Middle East, and Ms Macapagal was heading here yesterday to Bahrain for another appearance.

Hong Kong-based Filipino labor activists, who said Ms Macapagal hadn't done enough for overseas workers, have urged their supporters to turn Hong Kong into a "no-vote zone" for her—but 88,677 Filipinos have registered to vote, and some

GMA A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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WEATHER FORECAST

US asks RP to freeze terrorists' assets

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE UNITED States has asked Philippine banking regulators to freeze the deposits and assets of 15 suspected international terrorists and one drug trafficker with ties to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terror network and those with links to another terrorist group, the Communist Party of Nepal.

In compliance with the US request, the then Money Laundering Council and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas directed banks, trust entities and non-bank financial institutions nationwide to immediately report any transactions believed to be related to the individuals and groups identified by the US government.

Ordered frozen were the funds, assets or economic resources, including offices, of Ibrahim nationals Ramzi Yousif, Cherif Said Sait, Abdelbaset Ali, Lotfi Raissi, Lazhar Bin Khalifa Ben Ahmed Bouhio, Imad Ben Mehdi Zarkaoui, Mourad Nabehi, Kamel Ben Mouldi Hamiroud and Noureddin Erind.

Also included in the US freeze list were Egyptian Fadl and El Sanni Ahmed Fadl El Ayashi, Somalis Gle Mohamed Gulaidullah, Sogh Mohamed Tahir Osmanil and Mohmed Amin Mohtik, Libyan Faouzi Ben Hassan El Saadi, and Moroccan Driki Mohamed and Bentaib Boujaiba.

The US government also included drug trafficker Jawood Ibrahim in the freeze list. Ibrahim, a Pakistani, is said to be involved in the large-scale shipment of narcotics to the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

"We hope that your government will freeze the assets of these individuals and implement other measures as soon as possible," said US Embassy Economic Counselor Morton Holbrook in a letter to BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura dated Nov. 15.

Also ordered frozen were the assets of the Communist Party of Nepal which is also known as the United Revolutionary People's Council and the People's Liberation Army of Nepal.

"Hunting off the flow of funds to the party is a vital step in enhancing its ability to carry out additional terrorist activities," said the US government.

Republic Act 9160 or the amended Anti-Money Laundering Act allows the council to look into suspicious accounts without prior court approval as long as these involve kidnapping, hijacking, arson and murder, including those perpetrated by terrorists.

Member economic groups in southern Philippines are suspected of having strong links with Bin Laden's al-Qaida network, believed to be behind the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the United States.

SEC, IC asked, too

Aside from the BSP, other AMLC members such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Insurance Commission are also expected to carry out the request of the US government as their regulatory jurisdictions.

The US requested yesterday in the US list of Ibrahim nationals' properties in Italy and other parts of Europe, according to the report.

Some of them were said to have circulated volunteers for military camps in Iraq, organized by the Asian al-Ittihad group, a terrorist group operating in Northern Iraq.

The Ibrahim-headed terror group maintains contacts throughout Europe, the Middle East and Western Asia—in Pakistan, Iran, Yemen, Iraq, Malaysia and Afghanistan, said the US government in its report.

Based on information provided by the Italian government, the suspected Ibrahim asset involved in al-Qaida's worldwide terrorist network members of Nasrallah Mihy, Cannavo and Parma.

Material support

The 15 suspected terrorists provided financial and material support to terrorist activities in Italy and Europe and aided their colleagues in other European countries and even Far East to reach Western countries freely and securely by providing false identification documents, council and residence.

As for Ibrahim, his assets are was allegedly used by Bin Laden in his smuggling routes from South Asia, Middle East and Africa.

In the late 1990s, Ibrahim was said to have traveled to Afghanistan under the protection of the ousted Taliban government. He is also wanted in India for the Bombay Exchange bombings on March 12, 1993, which killed hundreds of Islamists and injured more than a thousand.

All 15 suspected terrorists have been included on the United Nations sanctions list and are subject to a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze which the Philippines, as a UN member state, must enforce.

The US government has also sought the Philippine assistance in uncovering the activities of other persons involved in or still associated with Ahmed Rafiki Harun al-Khalifah alias Abu Mayadah al-Libyani.

Swiss no longer welcome Marcos funds, says lawyer

IS AN opponent bid to cause its image as a haven for dirty money, banks in Switzerland no longer accept deposits the origins of which are questionable, including funds suspected of links to the Marcoses.

Yves Habbal, a Swiss lawyer hired by the Presidential Commission on Good Government to help recover the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcos family, said Swiss banks have been encouraged accept deposits believed to have links to the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos or any of his kin.

"Swiss banks don't accept money from the Marcoses now. For the past two years, they have refused money of criminal origin," Habbal said in a press conference at the PCGG office last week.

Ferdinand had been the favorite haven for the deposits of many world leaders, particularly rogue dictators, because of its strict bank secrecy laws.

In recent years, however, the bank secrecy laws which had prevented Swiss banks from divulging any information on deposits have been challenged by governments seeking to recover the ill-gotten wealth of their former leaders.

For elsewhere in Europe, some banks still entertain Marcos deposits. "Some banks do, some banks don't," Habbal said.

Habbal, who has been on the trail of the Marcos wealth since 1986, disclosed that in the past six months he has uncovered about 300 unreported Marcos dummy corporations in Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Belgium and Panama.

They are now investigating which of these dummy firms are still being used by the Marcoses to hide their ill-gotten money, he said. "It must be an important account," Habbal said.

Habbal said he and Swiss bank officials have met with PCGG officials how to recover other suspected Marcos assets in Europe.

So far, the PCGG has recovered $683 million of the Marcos deposits in Swiss banks. The funds are now being held in escrow in the Philippine National Bank.

The Swiss Federal Supreme had ruled in 1990 that $339 million in deposits, which grew to $683 million with interest, which the Marcoses had stashed away in various Swiss banks were ill-gotten.

On July 15 the next, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a decision ruling which it affirmed on Nov. 16, ordering the forfeiture of the $683 million in favor of the government.

Habbal, however, believes the government has only skimmed the surface of the Marcos wealth.

He said the late dictator hid the money well.

"Maybe they don't even know where the money is," he said, referring to the heirs.

Habbal said the Swiss banking industry, linked as among the best in the world, had realized that it had to protect its image. **Rene Pamfiloni**

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Debt trap threatens RP, analysts warn

THE PHILIPPINES is caught in a vicious debt trap on a downhill in revenues has forced the country to persistently borrow to meet its huge debt obligations.

With only 10 percent of revenue collection ahead of shortfalls in fifty-nine, the fiscal burden is expected to worsen, putting added pressure on interest rates and the peso-currency, analysts warn.

The Philippine government, Asia's largest sovereign debt issuer outside Japan, has been running budget deficits in nine of the last 13 years.

With debt levels rising rapidly, revenue collection has been eroded by graft and inefficiency.

The country's public sector debt has ballooned to P5.1 trillion (US$91.1 billion), greater than the value of the economy's total output, and is expected to hit P5.6 trillion by 2010.

Time bomb

Public sector debt is the amount of borrowings accumulated by the government and its agencies throughout the years, as well as money owed by the people and consequently paid through the national budget.

"The debt market, like a time bomb, ticks away," Sen. Ralph Recto, who heads a panel studying the problem in the Upper House, remarked recently.

Recto said the borrowing level had reached a critical stage that soon by half the proposed 2004 national budget of P864.8 billion would go for debt servicing instead of vital development and social services for the country's 80 million people, one third of whom languish in poverty.

Confidence problem

Jose Isidro Camacho, who was Dominico Macapagal-Arroyo's top economic adviser until he resigned as finance secretary last month, said the country's high debt level was not unmanageable and had resulted in a higher risk premium.

"It is also arousing a sense of concern that could eventually lead to a problem of confidence" in the government's ability to meet interest obligations and principal payments, he said.

A respected investment banker, Camacho blamed the country's political system for the mess, referring particularly to Congress for delaying important legislative reforms to enhance investment.

"In a worst-case scenario, the markets may stop lending money to the government, which could then be forced to turn to the IMF or some international agency for help," said David Cohen, an economist with BMB in Singapore.

No signs of default

Cohen ruled out any immediate signs that the Philippines would suffer a debt default because ratings given to the country were kept in "below investment grade, but just barely."

"But when you depend on external financing, you are vulnerable to a shift in investor confidence," he warned.

Based on September data, total Philippine debt had reached 86.7 percent of gross national product (GNP), which is "quite disturbing," according to Asian Development Bank economist Lin Xiaoling.

"If there are no reforms in place to increase revenues, then the government would be in a difficult situation," Lin said.

Of ailing agency Moody's warned last month that heightened political uncertainties was having adverse consequences on the government's financial position and the overall economy.

President Macapagal is to be challenged in upcoming elections by local movie icon Fernando Poe Jr., a high school dropout who has never held public office.

Despite her apparent inability to win in reelection, and the debt problem, Mr. Macapagal is largely seen in pro-reform by the markets.

Thio Chin Loy, a senior currency analyst at HSBC in Australia in Singapore, said the 2004 elections "adds to the worry that debt will not receive significant attention next year or so."

"The only caveat is the improvement in the global economic environment, which bodes well for Philippine export prospects next year and hopefully (would) help stabilize debt levels and give some support to the peso," he said.

This forecast is the peso to remain at around the 56 level against the dollar before recovering to about 53 at the end of 2004. AFP

Malaysia readies Robot quiz team

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia may send a team to the Philippines to question investor Jeffrey Robb Sachs, the Commander Robot, about the alleged crimes of tourists in an e-resort in April 2000, local media said Sunday.

"It is possible we might send a team to investigate him or get the information from the Philippine authorities," Defense Minister Najib Razak was quoted here as saying by the Bernama news agency.

A special team of officers was preparing questions they want to ask Andang, said Noordin Darus, police commissioner for Sabah state on Borneo island.

Andang, a leader of the Abu Sayaf insurgent group, is in hospital after being shot during his arrest last week by government forces in Jolo. AFP

Search ordered for mini drug labs

INTERIOR and Local Government Secretary Jesse Lina has ordered local government officials nationwide to inspect all registered business establishments to ensure that no illegal drug laboratories were operating in this area of jurisdiction.

In a memorandum issued on Dec. 10 to all city and municipal mayors, Lina warned that establishments which refuse inspection face sanctions such as the non-issuance, revocation or non-renewal of permits, licenses and clearances or transactions thereof.

Lina said he says one of the dictated powers of local government executives would boost the government's anti-drug campaign, adding that if mayors exercised these powers there would be no territory left for drug lords to operate in.

Lina issued the directive after the Philippine National Police noted that drug lords were now manufacturing illegal drugs in "mini-laboratories" in resident places and were using legitimate business fronts to avoid detection. Helen F. Flores

Iggy gets brickbats from election rival

Turn to page A5

nal's fifth district, insists the purchased Bentley is his—a fact known at the center of loud accusations supposedly used by Pasi lawmaker Miguel "Mike" Arroyo to launder money.

The accusation, with an aggregate total of P200 million, centered the name of the Iloilo-born paternal grandfather, Jose Ma. Peñalosa Arroyo.

Should Iggy or "Ignacio" don't run under the invented name that guarantees as much recall as telenovela?

"I am missing you(r)," Iggy de said, laughing, when asked if he thought he stood a chance against Iggy as Arroyo or Peñalosa, or all of the above.

But the cordon with which Arroyo is said to be preparing himself for the local battle royal with a cloth of tattered politics is an Iloilo saddler.

Senator Loyola, chair of the Senate committee on foreign affairs, said Arroyo's political machinery had "failed to kill you."

"They have money—lots of it," Loyola noted. "I've received reports that his supporters were distributing ace to my council aides by helicopter."

The original Jose Pidal was from Iloilo, but the current one came land in the contested district.

For good measure, Loyola added, Arroyo—who grew up in Manila, studied in the United States, and spoke mostly in English—had hired a search to thoroughly learn the local languages. "They say he can already speak Ilonggo, but is having problems getting the right accent," Loyola said.

Iggy reacts

Yesterday in Bacolod City, Arroyo and three men are ready to run of Lapulapi's headdress.

He had just hired a speech writer, he said, because "speaking Pasay Ilonggo is not necessary in Congress, as long as I understand what the people need."

And while he also denied that his opposition were dividing his vote, Arroyo pointed out: "It is not election to help people, especially during Christmas."

Loyola, an original member of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and ex-palacemaan secretary to then President Fidel V. Ramos, is seeking a third term. He was stripped of the Lakas leadership in Western Visayas when the chairmanship was given to Arroyo months before the Pidal scandal broke.

The party only granting opposition for the incumbent makes Loyola's (official statement) clear how it is.

ARROYO, aka Jose Pidal

LOYOLA

dore, but he said he would not succeed of this rally when he sees his nomination form in any case, he declared, "I definitely will be running. He won't decide his overall case of candidacy on Dec. 26.

Arroyo is just as determined, and prepared for subscribers use the election year. "I have always said I could run under another party." He says nothing about re-losing another name.

Opposition Sen. Pimlico Lacson, a presidential aspirant, launched the Pidal case on Aug. 18, pointing to the Pasi Gentleman as the man behind the alias. Iggy came out last year a week later, on Sept. 1, claiming ownership of the account in his effort to take the heat away from his older brother.

The Pidal issue is expected to be one of the opposition's major assault weapons against Palos dem Macapagal-Arroyo this campaign season starts. Opposition lawmakers are actually trying to revive the stalled Senate probe of the controversial account. With a report from Carlo P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

GMA woos OFW vote in Hong Kong trip

Turn to page A5

ers clear by way of Mr. Macapagal. "We want her," said Concepcion Brocia, a maid from Manila. "She knows everything. She's very down."

The President is seeking a full six-year term after being sworn to power by mass protests in January 2001 that toppled President Joseph Estrada, an actor turned-politician now detained on corruption charges.

Mr. Macapagal reminded the crowd—which had been lined up in advance by a lively band playing Elvis Presley classics and Christmas carols—that she'd signed a law to federally distribute expatriate Filipinos vote.

Raffle gifts

Filipinos who won raffle gifts, ranging from medical checkups to shopping vouchers, packed into the canopy as a beaming Romulous handed out their prize certificates and shook their hands.

"Merry Christmas," she told the crowd.

But there is an opportunity for likely election fare—never Romulo Fio A., former Sen. Raul Roco and opposition Sen. Basilio Lacson—would have difficulty not being.

Underground for Lacson called the trip politics disguised as official business, and predicted Filipinos would see through it.

"A lot of the things she has been doing is really campaigning," Lacson said. "But that makes the case almost come up for that by saying as president she has to communicate with all Filipinos all over the world. That's a far-legal excuse but is really overboard. She's going to three places just to campaign."

It's unclear whether the success-rose will make much of solid. Arroyo, but it could be a right race. The Philippines has about 8 million overseas, and 10 million Filipino overseas, just 814,000 have registered for the last voting race.

Lacson is using an Internet site accessible to overseas voters, but it's unclear whether he will campaign overseas.

"We have a 90-day campaign period and that's pretty limited," Senator said. "Maybe Hong Kong because it's quite near, you can fly in and out. But Bahrain and other places in the Middle East—and other places—would take three, four days."

Many of the maids said they'd enjoy a visit by Iloy, though not necessarily because he's a candidate.

"I'd like to see him because he's a movie star, but I wouldn't want him for president," said Lisalyn Bautista, who is from Bicol.

Bautista said Ms Macapagal was "just doing us" to get votes...but she plans to vote for her anyway.

'No sacred cow' Berroya willing to quit anytime

By Christine F. Esguerra

EDITED: He was no "sacred cow," one of the **promised "untouchables" in the Philippine Na**tional Police yesterday insisted he was willing to cut short his career and retire even today, if doing so would ease the heavy burn-rate controversy.

Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya said he was not resisting the order of PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. seeking him as chief of the Civil Security Group.

Berroya's relief would be the final piece in the controversial first round of the top-to-bottom revamp that ended the PNP two weeks ago.

But however he views "sacrificing" four more years of police service, Berroya said.

A 1969 graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, the controversial officer said he was not due to retire until 2005, owing to President Macapagal-Arroyo's memorandum extending his career last March when he turned 56, the compulsory retirement age for police and military officials. He said the President had given him another year with a possible three-year extension to make up for the four-and-a-half years he spent in jail facing legal incubation in kidnapping activities.

The Inquirer learned that Berroya's name under was due one either yesterday or today, the start of the Commission on Elections' ban on government reorganizations. At least two PNP officials earlier told the Inquirer that Berroya was being groomed for a juicy position in the Bureau of Customs.

Berroya broke his silence following accusations by several senior PNP officials that he and Director Eduardo Matibatibi, erstwhile chief of the powerful Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, had asked Malacañang to reassign them from the service.

The officials said "intense lobbying" by the two—among the President's most trusted lieutenants—was the reason Ebdane had to nap the non-assignments of 17 of the 20 officials affected by the reshuffle, including Berroya and Matibatibi.

Yesterday, Berroya admitted he had discussed the issue with Ebdane and other "Malacañang personalities," but said it was not to lobby for a position or to stay in as CSG chief.

Palawan bolsters anti-cyanide drive

CORRECTED Subsequent

To increase awareness of the evils of cyanide fishing and encourage the public to report illegal fishers, the Indonesia-to-Dagat Association of Fish Exporters (Inda-Fe) partners and its partners will hand out cash awards and certificates of recognition to those responsible for the confiscation of the deadly substance and the apprehension of suspected violators in the course of El Nido, Taytay, Quezon and Bataraza in Palawan.

The awards ceremony will be held on Dec. 16 at 5 p.m. at the QAF auditorium in Puerto Princesa City.

Inda-Fe exporters president Romeo Cheng said the support of NGOs like the Palawan NGO Network Inc. and the Marine Aquarium Council and its partner agencies in government like the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and Palawan Council for Sustainable Development has instilled in the effective monitoring of the illegal activity and the initial success of the movement.

"We are off to an auspicious start in our effort to curb the practice of cyanide fishing in our seas and, with our partnership with the NGOs as well as local and national government officials, we are confident we can sustain the campaign," Cheng said.

The Philippines is the largest exporter of live fish in the world, with most of the catch coming from Palawan.

But the practice of using cyanide has threatened the coral reefs and sea grasses where the fish thrive.

This prompted the fish exporters to launch "Cyanide Watch" in September and set up "Kumbungan Hotlines" where the public could give information about cyanide fishers.

The awardees include Lt. Ashley Stacks and Tsgt. Warren Cameron of the 32nd Medcine Co. who confiscated 100 kilos of sodium cyanide in Bataraza town.

Expected to hand out the awards are Palawan Gov. Joel Reyes and Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

Ping: Talks with Poe could run up to deadline

By Christine O. Avendaño, Marichu Villanueva, and Melvin Gascon,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

OPPOSITION presidential contenders meets senator Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson will meet again this week to thresh out details on how they would unify the opposition before the Jan. 2 deadline for the filing of certificates of candidacy.

"We have agreed to convene talks, and it made clear that a decision is made, and this would be before the last day of the filing [of candidacy]," Lacson said in Roxas, Mindoro Occidental by night.

Poe and Lacson met on Saturday their second meeting since December and agreed to form a small group, which would include heads of theirs, to resolve the crisis that has divided the opposition over the choice of its official standard-bearer.

For opposition's sake

Lacson said he and Poe agreed on Saturday to decide between themselves who the united opposition standard-bearer would be for the May 2004 elections but not later than Jan. 2.

"We have agreed to talk for the sake of a united opposition," [illegible] no stagnating] no time[illegible] neighborhood, [illegible] using Jaydee Or saved] he long before we will be settled as an opposition bloc]," Lacson assured Mindoro Occidental strong Filipino party-mates at an early talking ceremony in Nueva Ecijas.

According to Lacson, Poe has not accepted his proclamation last week as the presidential candidate of the newly-formed opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Simple nominations

The opposition senator said that Poe told him he had initially accepted the coalition's nomination believing that it was a simple nomination similar to that accepted Lacson by his LDP party mates on Dec. 4.

The KNP coalition, led by LDP president and chair Sen. Edgardo Angara, had proclaimed Poe its standard-bearer at a big gathering in Makati City on Dec. 13.

The senator's camp also quoted Lacson as saying that Poe had told him that before the coalition's proclamation, he had met with Angara who told him that the coalition would nominate him to be its standard-bearer.

Secretariat

As this developed, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Poe's spokesperson, urged Angelito Banayo, the spokesperson for Lacson, to refrain from issuing statements that were mere "speculations and insinuations."

Invited denied Banayo's statement that Poe had agreed to postpone his filing of candidacy for presidency, but that Poe had agreed to a new selection process, and in fact the reason the senator had skipped his proclamation was that the latter had feared the selection process to be unfair.

The senator said that Poe did not mention any of these things when they talked after his meeting with Lacson.

"Ang sabi sa akin ni FPJ, okay magsayaw ako after ng laro, Lacson pero pag-usapan ang mga hindi pagkakaintindihan. Wala. FPJ told me that he and Lacson will talk again to discuss their differences," Sotto told the reporters in a phone interview.

Lacson said he would respect the outcome of a selection process, which would have the concurrence of a majority of LDP members, even if this would mean having to give up his candidacy.

Honorable man

Asked if he thought Poe was willing to sacrifice his presidential ambitions, Lacson said: "Being the honorable man that he is, I anchored he will do the same."

"That is the essence of democracy. This is why we have this selection process. When there's a [party] decision, it should be (a decision of) the majority not just of two persons," he said.

Lacson said his meeting with Poe, which was accepted by a "common friend" offered "a very bright, very positive future" for the opposition.

"[The meeting] only reaffirmed my initial impression of Mr. Poe that he was indeed decent (decent), magpuso (a gentleman) at tapat sa kanyang salita (and true to his word)," Lacson said.

He said Poe had assured him that the senior would present any attempts to rig the selection process. "Ping [told] sense [if it's not just], I myself will object," Lacson quoted Poe as telling him.

In Cebu City, Senate Minority Leader Carlos Padilla on Sunday urged his allies in the opposition to let Lacson and Poe settle the issue of the standard-bearer between themselves.

"We are heartened by the latest developments. We want unity in a healthy sign, a good indication that, eventually, there will be unity in the opposition," Padilla, a supporter of Lacson, said.

"Whatever agreement they would reach, the opposition camp should be happy to see and adopt their decision," he said.

In Iloilo City, Lakas provincial chair Rep. Arthur Defensor said the ruling party remains undaunted by the meeting between Poe and Lacson even which could result in a united opposition ticket.

"We are not alarmed. We have long anticipated the possibility that the opposition may unite because its leaders know fully well that if they continue to remain divided, they will spell their defeat. That's why they are lully ing (sic) us into the only way they can survive to be united," Defensor said yesterday. With a report from Jiji Padilla, PDI Visayas Bureau

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THE DAILY GOSPEL
Monday, December 15, 2003
2nd Week of Advent
1st Reading: Num 24:2-7, 15-17
Gospel: Mt 21:23-27

Supreme Court Doctrines
CRIMINAL LAW; HOMICIDE OR PARRICIDE; ... Treachery.—The essence of treachery is the sudden and unexpected attack by an aggressor without the slightest provocation on the part of the victim, thus depriving the latter of any real chance to put up a defense, and thereby ensuring the commission of the attack without risk to the aggressor. Treachery requires the concurrence of two conditions: (1) the employment of a means of execution that gives the person attacked no opportunity for self-defense or retaliation; and (2) the deliberate and conscious adoption of the means of execution. There is no treachery when the method is premeditated by a hesitant exchange of words between the accused and the victim; or when the victim is aware of the hostility of the accused towards the former, in the manner and the victim; or when the victim and physical qualities prior to the attack prevent the victim from the final blows were inflicted on the victim clearly show that he was forewarned of the impending attack, and that he was afforded the opportunity to put up a defense. Indeed, a killing done in the face of the accused is not treacherous. Moreover, any doubt as to the existence of treachery must be resolved in favor of the accused. [Citations omitted] (In time, Justice Puno[illegible], Decision in G.R. No. 146911, September 30, 2003)
BY: R. R. SORA

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HONEY HOLIDAYS
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SHANGHAI

One man holds Senate at bay

By Abigail L. Ho

THE SENATE has threatened to block the budget of the Department of Transportation and Communications because of the refusal of an official of an attached agency to appear before it.

Senators Vicente Sotto III and Juan Ponce Enrile, in particular, had questioned the presence on the Civil Aeronautics Board of senator Sherwin Gatchalian's adviser Alberto Lim, who was affiliated with the advocacy group Freedom to Fly Coalition.

Freedom to Fly has been fighting the government monopoly, Philippine Airlines and Lim-allegedly with Japan Digital group, a USAID-funded organization, reportedly trying to influence Philippine policy and sway public opinion toward supporting Philippine interests.

Lim, while being upset about the subpoena of senators Sotto, Enrile, said there was no reason for the budget of an entire department to be held hostage because of him, as he was not guilty of whatever issue the Senators were accusing him.

"I feel like being of service [in the job]. They have the impression might see me. They're just doing us because I was a member of FFF, which is a member of Apec," he said in an interview on Friday.

Lim denied being part of Apec's team of consultants, however, although he admitted having one of Freedom to Fly's founding members.

But he said he severed his connection with Freedom to Fly when President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed him to the CAB Board. He did this, he said, to avoid the perception of a conflict of interest.

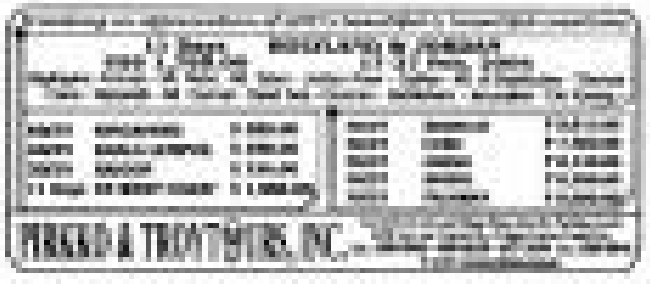
Conflict of interest was the issue senators Sotto and Enrile were particularly concerned about. With Lim as the government representative in the CAB, he was seen as having power to enact measures policies in favor PFC.

Lim said he was only in CAB because Ms. President appointed him, and his only reason was to protect the interests of the country, mainly the overseas industry and overseas Filipino workers.

He made it clear he was not about to resign even in the face of senate censure.

"If the senators say so? No, I will not resign. I will not resign on [if] I will not resign. This is more of on the position on my time. I don't want very much from the job and I have to talk home from trips abroad just to attend meetings that sometimes only go unproductive the last minute," he said.

He added that he was looking out for government interests as well as representing the government's position while engaged in the aviation industry, "which is liberalization."



Comelec validates registration of 9M voters

graphic information. This was also a chance to transfer voting precincts for those who have moved.

The poll body seeks to have a computer database of all registered voters in the country as part of its three-pronged election modernization program. The database should eliminate the presence of fictitious and flying voters by networking Comelec records in all its offices.

The Comelec purchased P1 billion worth of validating machines from the Franchi Ltd. consortium Inquirer reported. The machines were brought to the mall last week to facilitate the calculation of voter employees and family members.

Drug test

Before they can file their certificates of candidacy, all candidates must first visit drug testing centers to ensure that they are not users of illegal drugs, according to Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Lakas, Bukidnon).

Zubiri, chair of the House committee on illegal drugs, said a mandatory drug test for those aspiring for public office was required under the Dangerous Drugs law of 2002.

"Comelec is duty-bound to reject candidacies of candidates filed by aspirants if they fail to present result from any drug testing center for drug abuse," he said.

Zubiri said that not even Mr. Macapagal was exempted from this requirement, noting that the lawsuit signed this announcement.

Abalos said yesterday the poll agency was not expecting any big fish to come on the first day of filing of certificates of candidacy because "it would be impractical for them."

Most politicians wait until the last day of filing because if they file early, they will be covered by campaign laws, said Abalos, a long-time mayor of Mandaluyong.

"Nobody would be filing on the first day for practical reasons. Once you're a candidate, you will be covered by laws on premature campaigning, and there are a lot of grounds to charge you with that," Abalos said in a phone interview yesterday.

He said that candidates' mere guesting or speaking at forums where they are embossed by television and other campaign materials could be a ground for premature campaigning.

The campaign period officially starts in the second week of February, or 90 days before the elections. Candidates found guilty of premature campaigning can be disqualified.

Abalos said politicians need not take the risk unless they wanted to create publicity for their candidacy by doing things that border on the legal and illegal.

Gimmick

"Each has a gimmick for the elections," he said, but he added that those who have already declared that they are running would run quiet for a while because "everyone knows (them) are already a candidate."

Of the presidential aspirants, Abalos said only former Sen. Raul Roco could be running today. Roco's camp, however, denied this.

Abalos said he was sure that opposition candidates, such as Makabayan Rep. Satur Ocampo, Philippine National Police chief, Gen. Pomblo Lacson, would not be filing anything.

For and Lacson, who have both declared that they are running for president, are reportedly cooking ways to unite the opposition.

Mr. Macapagal, who declined his nomination to unite the presidency this year after reaching dropping down to run, would also not be tempted today, said Abalos, a former officer of Mr. Macapagal's political party Lakas-CMD.

"Everyone has until Jan. 2," Abalos said. Those who file on the first day are usually nuisance candidates who come to the Comelec with feathers and bamboo, he said.

Abalos said he has discussed Governor Abraham Ishiag, new head of the Comelec legal division, he personally advised to file more important candidates coming in so as not to create any connection in the office.

Nuisance candidates are required to file their certificates of candidacy at the Comelec central office in Intramuros, Manila, while local candidates are to submit their forms to the election officers in their municipalities or cities.

Party affiliation

The Comelec in Western Visayas also expects a low number of candidates filing their certificates of candidacy because many candidates have not finalized their affiliations with political parties and coalitions.

"All reports the deluge of applications when the party affiliations and nominations of candidates are listed," Victor Ilaforas, Comelec regional director, said in a telephone interview.

Ilaforas said the split within the opposition ranks Lakas-ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) could pose a problem in the filing of applications by LDP-affiliated candidates.

There could be disputes on who is the authorized party official nominating candidates for positions, he said.

The LDP, the largest opposition party, has since divided between those supporting the presidential bids of Roco and Lacson. The party's president has removed pro-Lacson officers from their positions, including Makati Rep. Agapito Aquino, the secretary-general, but this has been opposed by the Aquino camp.

In cases of true contenders in front a party for the same position, the Comelec national office will determine who the party official authorized to nominate candidates is, Ilaforas said.

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Reds to earn ₱2.25B in poll fees, says AFP

From page A1

that the Communist Party of the Philippines' armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), had begun collecting the fees from people seeking elective positions next year.

Earlier, communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal disclosed that PPC negotiators had collected initiation fees from candidates for the past several months. The payment of such fees, he said, had long been "an election fact of life since the CPP/NPA came into prominence."

Citing many field reports, Del Rosario said the rebels were charging candidates for governor ₱100,000 each; those running for congressional seats, between ₱500,000 and ₱800,000; and those seeking mayoral posts, between ₱50,000 and ₱200,000.

As the military reported some 400,000 candidates for public offices in the May elections, Del Rosario said that the rebels could collect ₱2.25 billion based on the military's "lowest estimate" that only 10 percent of the candidates would pay at least ₱50,000 as "campaign fees."

The Army official said that the rebels would be entitled for eight M-16 rifles if a candidate could not shell out ₱500,000, and four M-16 rifles instead of ₱300,000.

Rosal said the PPC fee for national candidates was always "open to negotiation."

AA ROGER hosts an "authority of revolutionary movement" in Negros Occ.

Even during truce

In an interview last week, the CPP leader said the "processing" of PPC fees would continue even during the 15-day truce that his group declared in the spirit of Christmas.

"We even expect to receive more queries from candidates because of the truce. They will surely take advantage of the stop in the fighting to freely transact their business with us," Rosal said.

"It's the candidate's way of acknowledging the political authority of the revolutionary forces in the Red-controlled areas," he claimed.

Party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales (Akbayan!) and Rep. Rhoda Agapa-Yaon (Bicol Human Bill No. 3518) seeking to criminalize the collection of "revolutionary tax" and PPC fee" by the NPA rebels as "harassment" and an "extortion scheme" against candidates.

Del Rosario said the bill would "add more teeth to the government's campaign against crimes committed by the NPA against the people."

But Rosal joined Jun et. l., and even dared Rosales, a former union parliamentarian, and the government to stop the "long line of candidates" that, he claimed, "are willing to pay (PPC fee just to be allowed) at this early" to run the campaign it and to redistribute riches.

He advised the government to "just respect the "authority of the revolutionary movement." He said the NPA had 110 guerrilla fronts scattered across the country.

Rosal reiterated that no candidate-candidate-type payment of the PPC in the rebel areas. "The best thing the candidates can do is meet with the legitimate and authorized representatives of the NPA to settle the required PPC fee," he said.

"But we can [also] be in the form of materials goods, such as communication equipment [radio sets and cell phones], cash and other things that we need in our daily operations. This can be discussed during negotiations," he said.

Living in luxury!

The military yesterday invited Rosal's reaction that the fees were used to fund the rebels' socioeconomic, health, educational and cultural projects in the countryside.

"This is a big lie," Del Rosario said in a statement. "The truth is most of the proceeds go to the pockets of their leaders, making the lives of the people more miserable and jeopardizing political candidates' investigation."

In contrast to the top NPA leaders' "luxurious lifestyle," supposedly funded by campaign collections, ordinary rebels receive nothing from the loot as they suffer in the field, the Army official claimed.

"That's overlooked and old accusation from the left. They are just failing for information but they don't have anything about the financial situation of the revolutionary movement. The military has zero knowledge of our funds," Rosal said in a mobile phone interview early last night.

He countered with a similar allegation by pointing at corrupt government and military officials. "Whoever made this accusation against us believes that because there are lots of corrupt high AFP officials, there are also corrupt NPA rebel leaders," he said.

"They are wrong. From the local level up to the regional and the central committee of the CPP, all of the money is duly accounted," he explained.

Rosal recalled that the government used to transport that the funding source of the communist rebellion comes from abroad. "Now it's the PPC this time. But we have long been collecting this financial requirement from the candidates," he pointed out.

He said the Red-friends-based CPP leaders lived on these ones and did not rely for their subsistence on their Philippine-based comrades. "They write books, accept speaking engagements, give lectures. Role recently allowance from their host countries," he said.

The WORLD

Editor Lorraine B. Greco

EU constitution summit collapses

BRUSSELS—The European Union was faced Sunday with months of debilitating uncertainty after summit talks designed to thrash out a new constitution collapsed in spectacular fashion.

After two years of drafting the historic charter, which is supposed to equip the bloc for its biggest enlargement yet, EU leaders leave their chairs in the round in the face of an irreconcilable dispute over national voting rights.

Successive attempts by the EU's Italian presidency to broker a deal floundered on Dutch demands by Poland and Spain to retain the generous influence they secured in the Nice Treaty three years ago.

Bouncy and Eurosunny, on the other side of the divide, also refused to budge on their demands for a constitution that will allow an enlarged 25-nation EU of 450 million people to work efficiently.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi conceded defeat after seeing his compromise proposals on the voting rights question fail to break the impasse, describing the disagreement as "total."

The climax arrived talks of the EU's six founding members—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—going their own way in a "two-speed" EU.

French President Jacques Chirac warned his demand for "pioneer groups" of EU members, while German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said a rump-style Europe might be "the logical consequence" if the new constitution is not adopted.

The move now passes to Ireland, which replaces Italy in the EU helmet next month.

But Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said he would wait until Blair debates the upcoming election for governmental confidence (IOC) on the constitution.

"I feel that before March there will be no agreement. There's not enough political will to find an agreement," he said. "This is a huge project. This is a fundamental change for the whole of Europe. It's not unusual on such a big project that people have conflicts on it."

The treaty must be ratified in all 25 present and future member states, including via at least 10 national referendums, before it can take effect. AFP

TENOR AND BRIDE

Italian opera singer Luciano Pavarotti kisses his bride Nicoletta Mantovani after their wedding at Modena's Teatro Comunale, northern Italy, Dec. 13. Pavarotti married his longtime partner and producer Mantovani in a civil ritual, celebrated ceremony. AP

Saddam calls up wife, son once a week, report says

LONDON—Saddam Hussein's second wife, who lives with the ousted Iraqi leader's only surviving son in the air-conditioned suite in Lebanon, said her husband calls or writes to them at least once a week, a London newspaper reported Sunday.

"If he cannot say something in detail on the telephone, I know I will receive a letter in two to three days giving me an explanation," Sajeda Talfah Khairallah told The Sunday Times in an interview.

After the Iraq war in March, Khairallah—described by the paper as mysterious and the closest confidante of Saddam's four wives—said she received the last letter from him three months ago in Beirut where she was given a Lebanese passport.

Now living under the name of Hadiya, she said she expected to move to Paris next month.

She said Saddam, ousted as Iraq's president following the US-led war on Iraq, is "fine" and "well-cared-for at home," and gives her five million dollars in cash and a hoard of jewellery and gold bullion sending her and his 21-year-old son, Ali, over the border into Syria.

Ali, Saddam's only surviving son, has changed his name to Hassan, according to his Lebanese passport.

Saddam's two older sons, Qusay and Uday, were killed by US forces in the war. Their mother and Saddam's first wife, Sajida, is thought to be in Qatar, the paper said. AFP

US condition forces deferment of nuke crisis talks

TOKYO—Six-nation nuclear crisis talks will not resume this month as the United States is insisting the abolition of North Korea's nuclear weapons is open to international scrutiny, Japanese press reports said Sunday.

The plan for holding, by the end of this year, a second round of the talks, which were initiated in Beijing last August, has been abandoned "by Washington's extreme," the TV Asahi network reported citing a Japanese diplomatic source.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hitoshi Tabakimo did not confirm the said information in his regular briefing.

The influential daily Asahi Shimbun said the United States and its allies, South Korea and Japan, had refused a Chinese-drafted joint statement for the talks because it was seen as ambiguous on the "verifiable and irreversible" manner of dismantling the nuclear program.

The revised draft statement was sent on Saturday to China, the host, by a visiting Japanese government official, Russia is also a party to the six-nation process. AFP

Empty train goes 45 km on own steam

JAKARTA, Indonesia—An empty train travelled 45 km on its own steam after the engine and eight wagons in new factory coming to a halt in the centre of the Indonesian capital, a report said Sunday.

The driverless commuter train, parked in the town of Bogor, came to life at around 2:30 a.m. Friday and headed towards Jakarta at about 85 km per hour, the state-owned news agency said, quoting station sources.

A railway employee who saw the train began to move climbed on board in an effort to stop the locomotive but could not resist the growing temptation.

An Indonesian state railways spokesperson, Hotlan Sitompoel, said "technical problems" were behind the runaway, and inquiry, which caused no casualties or damage.

Another spokesperson, Eddie Ardaka, told Internet client had been no electricity supply in the train and no driver on board.

Bogor is at least 150 metres (600 feet) above sea level while Jakarta is at the coast. The train came to a halt after it rolled to climb an incline in the Cibinong area of Central Jakarta.

Sutopoto said the railway employee, PT Kereta Api Indonesia (KAI), would investigate the incident. AFP

Bogor staff alerted all stations and railway crossing posts along the way once they noticed the train had left. AFP

Azerbaijan in mourning, awaits body of Aliyev

BAKU—The body of Heydar Aliyev, Azerbaijan's former president who raised the country with an iron fist for over three decades, was being flown home Sunday for a state funeral after he died of suspected heart complications in a US clinic.

Aliyev's death, announced this Friday, triggered a week of national mourning in the oil-rich former Soviet republic where he is widely respected and known by the affectionate nickname of "Father" for generations.

Aliyev's close to the presidential administration said Sunday the US-chartered plane carrying his body would touch down in the Azeri capital Baku, about mid-morning in readiness for a funeral on Monday.

Aliyev died in a private clinic in Cleveland, Ohio, where he was being treated for heart failure. He left Azerbaijan on July 31 for medical treatment, first in Turkey and then in the US, but never returned home.

His son Ilham—who succeeded him in a disputed presidential election in October—was expected to meet the coffin at the airport, the source said.

Analysts say the younger Aliyev, who is 41, and a political novice, will struggle to win the Western country's support for his bid to guide him and protect him from political rivals.

Heydar Aliyev, who ran post-Soviet Azerbaijan

Car bomb blast kills 18 at police station in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq—A car bomb killed 18 police cadets and wounded 20 more at a police station in eastern Iraq on Sunday, police lieutenant Hak Mohammad Ahmed and witnesses said.

"Two explosions were still near the gate of the station," he said. "It killed 18 and wounded 20 policemen, including senior officers and the cooks," he said.

"There's a big hole outside the gate about three or four meters across and more than two meters deep, and the outside wall was knocked down.

"We don't know what caused the blast," the lieutenant admitted, although witnesses earlier said it was a car bomb.

The casualties were rushed to the nearby Baquba general hospital, 100 km from Baghdad, witnesses said.

The blast left a charred wreck of a car and destroyed two other cars, AFP correspondents at the scene said.

It went off about 6:40 a.m. as the cadets on the main road about 20 km to the east of Baquba, a military spokesperson in Baghdad said.

US armored vehicles blocked off the area and two tanks parked on the main road while an helicopters hovered overhead.

More than 100,000 troops had taken up position around the compound preventing anyone from approaching.

"There were no coalition casualties," the spokesperson said, adding that a US military quick reaction force had been sent to the town shortly between the rebel cities of Baquba and Fallujah where control president Saddam Hussein still commands loyalty.

The spokesperson had no information on Iraqi casualties.

About 150 policemen worked at the station.

On Sept. 15, the police chief of Khalidiyah, Col. Khidayir Ali Mahlifi, was killed when three assailants opened fire at his car.

The explosion was the latest in a string of attacks on Iraqi police and others seen as cooperating with the US-led occupation. Scores of Iraqis have been killed.

AFP, Reuters

Coalition addresses poor pay after walkout

BAGHDAD—The US-led coalition is reviewing pay for soldiers of the New Iraqi Army after suffering the embarrassment of a mass walkout from the very first battalion as the American post-war combat death toll nears 200.

With the coalition counting on the Iraqi force to assume ever greater responsibility for security, the US military commander in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, was obliged to explain how 400 of the 700 men had already quit the job.

Sanchez strongly denied that the soldiers left because they were afraid of being targeted by insurgents.

Stunned soldiers said they could not support their families on just $60 a month. Top pay is around $100 for a colonel.

"We're working to review the pay scales at this point and I think we'll have some decisions in the coming weeks," Sanchez admitted Saturday.

The general said the battalion, which passed out in October after a nine-week basic course, would continue to train and claimed morale remained high.

Sanchez said he did not see any leap in the coalition's efforts to recruit an Iraqi security force.

"I believe our targets for building the New Iraqi Army are well valid," he said.

The coalition is hoping to build an Iraqi army of about 40,000 soldiers in 27 motorized infantry battalions by next September.

Sanchez added that a new 550-strong Iraqi Civil Defense Corps battalion, made up of recruits sent by Iraqi political parties, should be on the ground battling Saddam Hussein loyalists by the end of the month.

He stressed the battalion would be under American command and the political party members would be grouped in integrated units. AFP

Roh says he is prepared to quit over fund scandal

SEOUL—South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun said Sunday he was prepared to quit over a political slush fund scandal that has emerged as the latest threat to his already troubled career.

Roh said that if a probe into last year's illegal election campaign funding revealed his aides had accepted more undeclared cash than his rivals he would resign, according to presidential spokesperson Yoon Tai-young.

"I will step down and quit politics if my camp is found to have improperly accepted funds totalling more than a tenth of the donations the GNP took," he was quoted as saying.

Hit by corruption scandals implicating his associates, Roh has already called for a national reconciliation on his role, saying he would resign if the heat got too hot.

At talks with political party leaders, Roh expressed "shame" for the implication of his associates in the slush fund scandal, the spokesperson said.

He urged opposition parties to cooperate with the prosecution's probe, but said he was ready to accept an independent inquiry if his camp "does not" prosecutors complete their investigation.

Prosecutors last week questioned two of Roh's close confidants on charges of taking illegal funds.

Roh, a former human rights lawyer who made election on anti-corruption platforms, has been hit by dwindling public ratings, labor unrest and a hostile parliament.

His leadership was undercut further in early December when the opposition-controlled parliament surrender Roh's veto of an independent slush fund inquiry.

Ruling party members have combed the books of giant business corporations. The GNP, however, insists it cannot trust prosecutors to conduct a fair inquiry.

The probe has also sustained opposition politicians. A key aide to the GNP's unsuccessful presidential candidate, Lee Hoi-chang, was arrested last week.

Illegal political donations have long been part of South Korean politics as businesses fear that without contributions they would be subject to punitive tax demands or attacks in parliament.

Political observers say Roh's governance is less corrupt than past administrations but weak support in parliament made him vulnerable to attacks from his opponents.

Roh's backing became more fragmented in September when loyalists broke from the former ruling Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) to launch the pro-government Uri Party in September. AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

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HO HARTYK. "Ralph and I have been together for 10 years," says the Star for All Seasons.

Vi: Running for gov is too much

'I'll decide on Dec. 19'

By Marinel B. Cruz

ACTRESS and Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos may run for reelection instead of for Batangas governor because the latter post is "too big."

"A gubernatorial position is definitely a step higher in the political ladder," Vilma told reporters Wednesday in an interview last Friday at the upcoming GSIS Centennial in Lipa City.

"But I'm not power hungry," she added. "I will run where I feel I am most effective. Running for governor is[] too big a consideration."

Last August, Mayor Vi said she has three options for 2004—to run for her third and final term as mayor, to run for governor of the province, or not to run for any public office at all.

She had said she was taking

TO MARINEL, A22

They may have an ebbing fling that they're a romantic item, but Eula Manalastas and actor-star Marvin Agustin were seen together at ME Bistro Depot in Ortigas Friday afternoon. Both were in civvies pants. Eula

DID YOU KNOW...

were also wearing t-shirt-sleeved polo shirts, and Alyssa, one in a familiar blouse.

PRIDE OF MAMA. Toya T wears off son Bubot's painting.

The truth about Tessie Tomas /A13

HIGHJACK. Russel Crowe as Capt. Jack Aubrey in Peter Weir's "Master and Commander"

POTTY PAINTING. One of her son Robin's paintings lights up the powder room.

The truth about Tessie Tomas

OUT OF THE CLOSET

By Kathryn Faleiro Reyes

Photos by Rudy Esparza

TESSIE Tomas, refusing to let her golden years keep her from making things happen, still dreams of conquering bigger mountains.

For one, she wants to make more movies.

"I want to do more good movies," says the funny lady. "International ones, in the same magnitude as 'A Dangerous Life.'"

"A Dangerous Life" is an Australian production about the Marcos family where Tomas played Imelda Marcos, and for which she was nominated for an Emmy award in 1988.

She wants to write a book. "That's one of my dreams that has not come true," she says, at the same time admitting that she can't begin it not because she always changes her mind about the subject. She would want to write about possible wars, or about her experiences when she took a six-month sabbatical.

She also wants to live out this fantasy. She wants to wear her Tina Turner hairpiece, complete with a Tina Turner costume and attitude, and then, in full Tina Turner regalia, walk around Makati's Greenbelt on New Year's Eve.

She puts on the hairpiece for this Close pictorial and goes into another room of their Legaspi Village condo unit to try out the look on husband Roger Padlan, and to ask him to join her when she goes on her New Year's Eve jaunt. When she comes back, she says, "Ayaw niya daw ko 'will you walk side by side with the wrong line?' 'My-wrd'"

"Minsan 'pag wala 'Eight of Isaac' sila, ginagawa na 'ang," she adds. "I like to check people, that's why one day I will do it. Wala lang, para kulang."

The Tina Turner wig is just one of her many hairpieces. She has been collecting wigs since she started impersonating celebrities and creating her own characters.

On Christmas Eve, she and Roger will have a quiet turkey dinner. Her son Robin will not be able to come home from New York, where he works as a fashion designer for E. Lacy (in Christmas Day, they will be celebrating with her mother, Lauro Herrera, in Marikina.

It's Christmas at Tessie and Roger's home. The front door of their unit is adorned with a Christmas wreath. A rectangular table in the hotel is alive with resin angels, poinsettias and artificial balls.

"Ako 'ang pantawas niyan," she brags of the table display. "Nagmalapad siguro si Lauro Cruz sawmarami." She used an old shawl as a table runner. "Wie and mavis ang 'yon. I borrowed that from Cynthia Gamboa, 'kasi' manager ng mandirigma ni Gloria Diaz."

Gamboa was the one who made small changes in the interiors of the condo unit. Robin's friend, Manuel Villafuerte, had originally redecorated the unit.

From the entrance, the visitor can see right away the 6-foot-tall Christmas tree in the living room area. Presents are mostly stashed underneath the tree.

A mini grass sofa set complements the purple-green walls in the living room. Following the green motif, the windows have olive green curtains over translucent white shades, a refreshing alternative to venetian blinds.

On the opposite living room wall, a huge mirror beautifully creates an illusion of space. "The mirror is the most expensive piece here," effecy Tomas. "The frame is made of real gold."

A red couch sits on one side of the dining set. She says it is her favorite spot. "All the members of our family are my idols. Mukhlis ako sa cutest Scorpio ako." So the powder room for guests is painted red.

Some of Robin's paintings are on the floor leaning against the wall in the powder room. Another Robin painting—of an Italian scene, complete with a gondola—hangs on the wall outside the master bedroom.

An antique divider from Iloilo stands on one side of the living room near the dining area. "Nu is an old piece," says Tessie. "Sa entre na favorite ko 'to. Dat kasi is even be-

TT'S TROPHIES (left) from the four awards for best talk show host, plus special recognition awards from the University of the Philippines

LIVING UP to her character as Imelda, TT has over a hundred pairs.

TINSEL TOWN. A Close groom in the dining room and a display vodevarian visitors (right) on the first lady of stand-up comedy greets the holidays.

HEAD TURNERS. Her collection (left) includes a Tina Turner wig and she uses the mirror when impersonating political figures like GMA. Visiting Baltimore Santiago and friends Marivic...

SEXY IN COSTUME. This Maldita coat won an award.

BOLD STAR Bonnie Busuella, a character she goes like to, wears this costume in TT's favorite color.

SLIMMING WOMAN on the treadmill

for refugees and disaster survivors. The group helps raise funds for the victims of the war in Bhidestan.

"I do films and projects in the evacuation centers and we interview the refugees," she says. "I went to Mindanao twice in July 2002 and again in July this year. The experience really opened my eyes. I didn't know there was so much poverty and suffering in Mindanao."

She has been offered many times to run for public office but she always turns them down. "Hindi ko siya talaga hilig," she says. "My husband also does not want me to. Ayaw niya. Ang mga politico daw ako, sweet na siya sa ling hand."

The closest she gets to politics is when she does election-oriented comedy shows, which she also plans to produce next year, an election spoof.

Before she resumed her daily TV hosting chores, she had time to work out regularly at the gym. "Every" is aired Monday to Friday however. "The daily show changed my life. Nasubsob ang mga tuhod."

She devotes the gym a treadmill at home. It is conveniently located in her home office. She watches TV while sweating it out on the treadmill every morning.

Sapa. "We just bought this Jacuzzi in New York. Pinahanduhan daw ganunin ito kasi komportable."

Jackets. "The Armani jacket is my favorite."

Jeans. "Favorite jeans ko 'to, also Armani. I bought them in New York."

Perfumes. "I like Klorofe by Lancome very much."

Bags. "This gold bag from London, given by my son. Cute 'yong design niya. Dia a from Spain, and this one's from Italy."

Shoes. "Sa Stiletto, Cesar, sa Italian brand.

Guarantees. "My Maldita costume won the best costume award in Manila Film Fest. Not of course my Russian Kamaleña costume."

Jewelry. "Iyong mga sa mga ano lang, pang-accessorize. Pa just throw all the lace so I can bring them easily to my shows. I have my own jewelry, and then there are those from exchange deals and sponsorships. Everywhere I go, ang mga makita nila, bumibili sila, like sa isang pumabot ng Barbara Fingers. More of these I bought in LA."

Bags. Her favorite Bonnelle red bag from Bonnel.

BARBARA'S BAUBLES. As she does for her character Barbara Bongco, she wore these accessories bought from LA and Hong Kong.

A14
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
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INQUIRER
OPINION

No show

IT could be that Fernando Poe Jr. deliberately missed his own proclamation last Wednesday as the "united opposition's" standard-bearer because he did not like to be associated with the political has-beens who staged the event. This is the view of some political analysts and veteran journalists, who think the popular actor was cunning enough to know that the crumbling images—a fetish face surrounded by tired old cases—would be certain toxic office poison.

EDITORIALS In this view, Poe's no show was nothing less than a declaration of its-

desperateness; from traditional politicians and all that they stand for.

There is something to this line of thinking. Almost six years after his equally famous best friend and fellow actor was elected to Malacañang, Poe is celebrated for a continuing act of negation: He never asked Joseph Estrada for any favors. In contrast, the usual suspects who showed up at the Hotel Intercontinental to proclaim him had compromised themselves during Estrada's abbreviated term in office: the likes of Johnny Ermite, Gringo Honasan, Ernie Maceda, Tito Sotto, Boy Morales, Jinggoy Estrada. These are not political virgins seeking sainthood, laureps in hand, for their beleaguered to appear at any hour of the night. They are more like pallbearers at a political funeral.

For Poe to be seen in their company would have been to get his campaign off to a morbid start.

Sadly, however, this view is almost certainly wishful thinking. It is like the political advice and newspaper columns in early 1986 that romanticized the candidacy of Estrada, painting him as a knight in proven Tiffies, riding to battle in a shining jeepney.

In all likelihood, the truth about Poe's no show lies not in his political but in his personality.

Not there

THE MOVIE director Cirio Santiago, in an attempt to explain the deep respect, even fear awe, that Fernando Poe Jr. enjoys in his chosen profession, told magazine editor and business columnist Jo-Ann Maglipon the answer may lie in yet another act of negation: "He isn't there." Santiago meant that Poe does not often show up at show business functions, that—and here we elaborate—putting a premium not only on his privacy but on his very presence. He is the undoubted leader in his industry (not even Estrada came close) because he understands that the exercise of leadership is built on a foundation of absence. In the literature of power, absence means that the leader is both with us and above us, both one with the people and apart from them.

It has been Poe's good fortune that one of his defining personal characteristics, the fierce sense of privacy that distinguishes the actor and film director in his very public line of work, has proved useful in his other role as industry leader. There is a perfect fit, as it were, between personality trait and leadership skill.

It looks likely therefore, that Poe did not show up at the proclamation—the second time since Sen. Ramon Revilla's in Club Filipino that a group calling itself the united opposition solely chose a presidential candidate—because that is what he does, or rather, that is what he doesn't do. He doesn't show up.

Instead of adding to his legend, however, Poe's no show only fueled more doubts over the staying power, the will to win, of the country's most reluctant candidate for President.

The question now is, Can one be an effective political leader in the sense, now-you-see-me, now-you-don't way? It is certain that a President Poe would not even think of showing up in the middle of a bloody Macao encounter. But then again, it is almost equally certain he would not show up on many other, more important occasions. In the last two weeks alone, Poe has failed to attend the biggest annual business conference, a scheduled meeting with his main rival (since rescheduled), and his own proclamation. What he hopes to do as an absentee president is a mystery.

After FPJ, here comes APJ

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

NINOY said FPJ has issues APJ, says APJ himself—Aquilino Pimentel Jr. APJ is running not for senator, not for vice president, but for president. At last. And while FPJ has no policy platform—yes—APJ has one: finally establish Tony as commander, too, because in acronym-speak FREEDOM.

After singing the alphabet song (yes Jones, "A you're adorable, B you're so beautiful, C you're a cutie full of charms..") APJ explained what each letter of his FREEDOM platform stands for.

"F" is for federalism, his current passion. He wants a federal form of government, just like the United States, to give the regions their autonomy. "R" stands for reforms in the government, in the police force, in the judicial system, etc. "E" is for economics, which is pretty obvious, because all our troubles start with a depressed economy. When the government and the people have no money you can't do anything. The second "E" stands for education—and he is not referring to FED's lack of it, either: in fact, because of a faulty educational system, students graduate from college with very little education, and the dropouts with enormous street lore thrive in the outside world—yes, just like FED. "D" is for debt, of which we already have too much and which our great, great grandchildren are fated to pay. "O" is for the OFWs, the overseas workers whose remittances are the only reason keeping us afloat.

The government should pay their own amortizations in peninsula. And "M" is of course for Mindanao, APJ's home. Mindanao can be the breadbasket of the Philippines, APJ says, but the government is not developing it. And on instead of freedom, what about private ownership? Bill Lewis and Suerte.

All of these letters put together spell FREEDOM, which is what we will all reap if APJ becomes president—freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from debt, freedom from ignorance, etc.

And freedom from corrupt and greedy politicians? Yes, that too.

• • •

Another presidential candidate, former Sen. Raul Roco, the man who is always surrounded by flowers, doesn't care for APJ's federalism, but he is determined not to have a parliamentary form of government, which is JDV's desperate but doomed desire.

Again pa-ding, we are politicians jumping from one party to another like so many bonsais, what more when we have a parliamentary system when it is the majority party that runs the whole government? A parliamentary system is for countries with strong political parties espousing definite ideologies and whose members are loyal to their parties. But in the Philippines, turncoatism is deemed a virtue instead of a vice and political parties are always competing politicians with the spoils of victory if they join ours. With the political jumping insects like we have, the parliamentary system will never work for us. For JDV maybe, but not for the nation.

The other thing that Roco said last week is that "we are in a de facto dictatorship," just like the Marcos regime. Well, not quite yet, but we're almost there.

One proof is what this government is doing to human rights prosecutor Judge Theresa Yadao of the Quezon City RTC for dismissing the Batasang Bakulaw case against Sen. Panfilo Lacson, himself the subject of prosecution by this government. This case has already been dismissed four times by the RTC all the way up to the Supreme Court, but the government keeps resisting it as though it were Lacson.

It was first dismissed by the Sandiganbayan. Then by the RTC for "lack of probable cause." The government elevated the case to the Court of Appeals which affirmed the dismissal. Not happy with that, the government appealed to the Supreme Court which also affirmed the dismissal. The government also filed a motion for reconsideration and woke the tribunal inside a complete turnabout, reversed the case and sent it back for trial to the RTC. That's where the case fell on the lap of Judge Yadao.

Judge Yadao found that there was a fifth time. But the government will not accept any decision that is not a conviction and incarceration of its nemesis: Lacson, even if the Kumong Bakulaw case is revived a hundred times, be it filed in municipal court, Lacson has nobody but himself from the case, but before she could decide, it filed an administrative case against her, seeking her suspension—a clear case of forum-shopping. The government clearly wants a judge who will convict Lacson. During the Marcos regime, enemies like Lacson just disappear or are detained incommunicado. The Macapagal regime is not doing that yet, but it is getting there. It is using the judicial system (what is the Supreme Court, which is not yet under the present set of its own, doing?) to get the same results.

The illusion dictatorship personified its enemies clandestinely. The Macapagal-Arroyo "de facto dictatorship" is doing the same thing, but in subterfuge.

• • •

A British national, one Paul (Bernard) Character, has been detained by the Bureau of Immigration, because of several charges filed against him. But he probably has powerful friends in the Bureau of Immigration. Commissioner Andrews Domingo is under extreme pressure to release him. High ranking officials from Malacañang, the Department of Justice, Pagcor, Interpol and a judge have all, on different occasions, interceded for the foreigner.

Why? What are their connections with him? Why are they interceding for him, even at the risk of violating the law? In a gauge of her integrity, Domingo is not succumbing to the pressure.

Filipinas

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

"FILIPINAS" is the title of Joel Lamangan's latest opus, the script written by Ray Ophelan. The "Filipina," there is the name of a family whose tale it tells. But it is also of course the name of the country whose tale it also tells. The story of Filipinas the family is meant in fact to be a microcosm of Filipinas the nation.

Filipinas, the family, is headed by a widowed matriarch whose children have become unsteady housekeepers, gone to the United States, worked as caregivers in Israel, served in the AFP (retired radical, and become a first lady accountant) businesswoman managing an entire farm. A veritable cross section of Philippine society.

The narrative focuses on the marriage of the youngest daughter shortly before Christmas. In the background are various references to recent turbulent events—the Oakwood mutiny and the Nida takeover, the visit by George W. Bush, the violent dispersals of rallyers—which have been wearing the country apart. In the foreground are the individual problems of the family members, which are fracturing their family apart.

Bluebird Merkano sees herself as the family doyenne, and pretty soon happiness for her mother and siblings. Richard Gomez is fleeing the IRA. Dennis Trillanes is awash in guilt after a friend dies in a bombing in Israel and just as awash in contentment at a hardworking husband. Winnifred Antonio, who seems perfect until she meets Trillanes, is a young officer who exposes corruption in the AFP and draws flak from his superiors. Victor Neri is constantly at odds with Gomez, whom he accuses of stealing at the country through American eyes. Alice Dixon, who is almost handsome, she can't quite tell, cheap imports. And Armida Siguion-Reyna seriously everything is God, or in the local period.

Tragedy after tragedy visits the family, and soon they find themselves at one another's throats. In the end, however, when all seems lost, when Armida's character, the common of the hospital, they find it in them heaven to forgive and forget and become a family again.

The movie's strength lies in its ambition and

sweetness of the complexities of current Philippine life. Like "Oil Portal," "Homecoming," Lamangan's "Filipinas" is not afraid to go boldly where others have not gone before. More than "Homecoming," "Filipinas" seems to epic range, to subject being nothing less than contemporary Philippines in even through the prism of a Filipino family. One is tempted to say a "typical Filipino family," but there is little that is typical about this movie—but I learn that before. To meet the challenge, Lamangan has assembled a crew of big stars—a "casting coup" it's been noted, with reason—who have been equal to the task. Armida is an inspired choice for matriarch. The other actors might fairly be their kids, but bosses for them—almost.

In appreciation of the incompetence of the pilots on this country's patent, in its depiction of the culture that has arisen from OFWs, interracial or international marriages (Melendez Marking's Filipina wife is a treasure), and in the dire effects of globalization on local agriculture. For side by side with a lingering insular (indeed hostile) religion or traditional outlook, it does bring certain contents to light, if not to clarity.

The movie's weaknesses is that it tries to say too much, and ends up saying little. Allegorical tales are not easy to tell. Had the movie taken on the aspect of a parable or fable, where the characters are representations rather than fleshed-out individuals, it might have been done better. As it is, it takes on the aspect of overdone realism, which compels it to flesh out characters, which it does not always do successfully. The characters do not escape being representations of social forces, notwithstanding the effort to individualize them by giving them a past—which in any case is more verbalized than dramatized, giving it little emotional resonance—and the look and mind. Musicians rather than people chasing. The dramatic moments do not end up being intensely dramatic because we grasp them more with the head than with the heart.

The "Filipinas as," as I said, are not a typical family. They are far too neat a cross section of Philippine society for them to be one. The movie draws so close, or as mirror like, a parallel with Philippine society that the characters have little space to breathe on their own. They are artificially excellent, but the actors do not have much to work on. The extent of the effort to draw a more exact parallel with Philippine society gives us when it makes character, the most lurch, becomes ominous, which is not got a reference to Iraq. Lamangan's opposite plight. Pilipino representatives debating whether to agree to remove her life support centers or not, you know they are debating whether to agree to remove Iraq Saddam's life support system—common work, by the way, on the part of—or not.

That makes the hopeful ending a little less hopeful. Most people I know who have relatives who on their boats and have the taboo taken off their mouths and some do pornography, not concern themselves. It's a wonderful idea, people discovering the best in themselves under worst of circumstances, people healing through the sickening pain, but I don't know that it convinces totally here.

Many readers will notice that I usually end columns like this with "Still, watch the movie, it's worth it." I mean it. These movies need our patronage. It is worth reminding people who take those risks with our cultural appreciation. That is how they will make more and better movies in the future. If we can do that amid our daily trying circumstances today, despite the temptation to give in to Hollywood blockbusters, then the message of "Filipinas" will not have been lost.

Disabled bag harvest of medals in Delhi

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

HOW 22-29. Our delegation landed 80th among 34 participating countries, bagging seven major medals. What makes the Philippines, which fielded seven less team, special is that it's the only international competition for athletes among the disabled across and a lot of them come from poor families. The Philippines' recent harvest of medals deserves that, as Team Lovely Sarmenta, Burnie, wife of Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo and chair of Makiapo Philippines, who accompanied the delegation to India, put it, "Filipinos are among the best in the world in terms of technical and vocational skills."

Here's the 80-nation output: two gold medals in painting bagged by Jose de la Cruz for water color and oil on canvas; two silver medals by Rosemarie Ingal in swimming and Ernesto Reyson in music terms; three bronzes by Jessica Balan in photography, Irvin Rivera in creating web pages and Ozzie Fernando in painting, oil on canvas. Their stories are heartwarming. Pilipino Deman Balan began as a deaf learner trained by the Gardeneers Movement, the Danao-awarded ecological group founded by Secretary Roberto Ongpin, but later broke dad-bed to photography and now has his little studio. Our ambassador to Indonesia Lulu del Rosario liked the painting of deaf artist De la Cruz so much that she commissioned him to do three paintings for the embassy.

The 39 team's successful participation was made possible through the close cooperation among the Philippines, whose head of delegation is headed by Ben Zulet, Tesda, the DSWD and the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons.

* * *

I recently ran into PSF Deputy Director and former NCR commander Reynaldo Velasco and it's heartening to note battle-hardened cop can ever has removed from that post and his new assignment as head of the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime (PCTC). Be warned that contrary to reports that he was among those who fought reassignment, he immediately set his sights on the PCTC post when martial law. Ricardo de Leon upon notification of his relief. Moreover, he says with the characteristic naughty twinkle of his eyes that despite may still be born to him, as he will retire in May of 2005 just—rewarding, he has all the time to wait for the "big POP" post. He also notes that the PCTC has been the launching pad of some PNP chiefs, among them Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza. Velasco says the PCTC will give him the opportunity to travel and try more relaxed pace. Good decision and the NCR lot east in two very trying events: the Oakwood mutiny and the Rush class visit. And, yes, no more phone calls from Governor at all hours of the day.

* * *

It was fascinating to listen to Velasco as he recalled the tensions of the visit of US President Bush and why he was 45 minutes late for his meeting with Gloria Arroyo at Malacañang. US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice was so adamant against letting Bush motor to the Mansion and refused him flown by chopper, but to Velasco this would have been a setback before the US President even arrived in the country. Velasco's safety, but Rice insisted on having a minimum of three lanes cleared for the Bush convoy or nothing, to the end, he says, "I gave her seven lanes, including the underpass." Rice cleared by the Filipino security men and the convoy and the US convoy passed by." Velasco recalled how he was scolded by President Macapagal-Arroyo at the height of the tension that afternoon for having allowed the demonstrations some space near the Mansion. But he recalled that after Bush left, GMA called him up and told him, "You can now sleep soundly" and that she was taking Bush everything she said earlier. That, he stressed, was the way of apologizing, and he recalls telling her to please relieve him of his post.

Gory movie promo

PICTURES are meant to liven up the pages of a newspaper. The more dramatic the shots, the better. The readers are not content with just reading about people, places and events. They want to have a visual idea of the subject of the news.

Unfortunately, not all published photos more than objective. Instead of interesting readers, sometimes they turn them off.

That was the situation the Inquirer found itself in for some readers of the Dec. 6 issue of its Saturday Inquirer section. Under the heading "Sagot Teleserbisyo," it featured a down to earth view of the new movie of Sharon Cuneta and Judy Ann Santos called "Pasty Mouth."

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Fabella

To refresh your memory, Cuneta became famous as "Korte Me Allawe" in the "Thelma Montiel" movie where he portrayed the role of a young boy who was inadvertently left behind by his family as in one of many trips. The scene not with physical harm by two bad guys, he snatch running and improvised gadgets to defend himself.

According to the write-up, the movie is about Michael Ang, a gay party organizer from New York who was murdered. "Ang," the report says, "was stabbed to death by his alleged friend Mr. Mendoza." Accompanying the article was the "pasted photo" of two young girls, wearing what look like trendy designer clothes, lying on a floor. The clothes, to use the words of the younger set, are chic and cool.

One girl was shown with her eyes open and brains exposed. A pool of blood and parts of her brain were on the floor. Near her arm was a hammer with blood covering the claw. Another girl was shown with her face facing the floor, her left hand held a knife that had a piece of her companion's brains. The bloody nature of the photo was enhanced by its dramatic colors.

Traumatized

The picture did not had a lot of readers. The youngest complainer came from Corazon Ong, a working mother of a 3 year-old girl, who said her daughter was so traumatized by the photo that she cried profusely. The incident was a big damper on the mother's efforts to encourage her daughter to read books, newspapers and magazines. The reader's concern for the Inquirer that day went to its lowest level.

Another reader, Anne de la Riga, was more polite with her comments, but her point was no less critical. She chided the newspaper for "going down to the level of 'shock' radio and TV programs in the United States that devote all miles of morality and decency to the wind to gain high ratings." He expressed serious concern about the adverse effects of photos of that nature on the impressionable minds of our youth.

In a backgrounder, announcers of "shock" radio programs use vulgar, sexist and profane language in their commentaries. That broadcasting style, sad to say, has attracted a large audience in the United States. Their "counterparts" on the boob tube, which goes by the name "reality TV," features unusual activities by some people, such as, eating live snakes or putting their heads between the jaws of a crocodile. Such viewership ratings of these shows don't indicate that they have successfully reached out to their target market.

When asked to comment on the complaints, the section editor said the photo is part of the promotional materials of the movie subject of the review. He did not say whether he consulted the members of the editorial staff before he decided on its inclusion in the section (which is the norm of newspaper in the editorial team on controversial photos) or acted unilaterally.

Underbosser

For one reason or another, I viewed that picture on the day it came out. Thank God, I did. I would have lost my appetite for breakfast if that photo greeted me in the morning.

The Inquirer has a long-standing editorial policy that the "decision to run photos of dead people should be based on common decency and simple good taste." Thus, it is not considered in good taste to run a photo of a crash of dead victims on a track, but it is permissible to publish a long shot of a body or two lying in the street.

The difference in treatment may be explained by the fact that a distance shot of corpses does not have the same emotional or psychological impact as a close-up view of bruised or strong bodies. Most readers do not enjoy graphic illustrations of death or physical suffering.

That the picture complained of was merely staged to promote a movie does not remove it from the coverage of the said editorial policy. It is the effect of the photo on the reader that counts in determining whether or not it should be published.

It's not surprising that the photo shocked the reader's daughter. In her young mind, the bloodstains and splattered brains looked real. She had no way of knowing that what she saw was just a "drawing" to make believe photo. Some adult readers may dismiss it as a gimmick to promote a movie, but for that 3 year-old it was true to life.

* * *

I do not buy the argument that the photo should be treated as an act here and therefore entitled to liberal treatment. I am no conservative, but I think there are limits to what forms of art, assuming the photo can be considered as such, can be published in newspapers of general circulation like the Inquirer. Some pictures that meet the criteria of adult magazines may not in newspapers that are meant to be read by all members of a family.

Just because a promotional material is acceptable to the American audience does not mean that it is fit for showing in the Philippines. Our cultural norms are not yet ready for that kind of thrill.

Clearly, the photo in question crossed the line on the newspaper's policy on good taste and decency in the publication of pictures.

The Inquirer keeps the indulgence of the readers, in particular, the 3 year-old daughter of the reader, for the unfortunate photo. It regrets whatever discomfort or pain it may have caused them. The appropriate measures have been taken to avoid a repetition of the event.

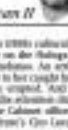
* * *

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Bgy. and Maxwell Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or reader-advocate@inquirer.com.ph.

GMA's heritage grades

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II



MY brother Ferrous is fine. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will lose the election. And it is not only because of a "winnability" problem over Fernando Poe Jr., but partly because of the image she has brought to the office of the presidency. The picture we get of GMA is that of a scheming whereby dealer who will sacrifice principles for the sake of the only thing that appears to matter to her administration, in other words, she wants another turn in Malacañang as head of state. She is willing to do almost it, and no matter what it takes. That is why the Jose Pidal issue appears credible to many. For only consolation is that it was opened by the civil-liberty-loving and common-holder Ping Lacson.

Still, GMA's ratings are not the highest to be valued by many Filipinos. It is amazing that with her vaunted intellectual capabilities and serious working style, not to mention a pampered life-degree, GMA cannot seem to read the public mind over her immediate term.

My own take on her is that ambition has made her so callous as to make her disparage the signs of the times which are written all over the wall. Or the way to 2004, it will probably help her to have the people see her as a victim of "dagdag bawas" and one of those is in the area of Filipino cultural heritage. If I were her brother, I would not hesitate to give her a flue F.

Recall that in the controversy over the Mehan Garden, the issue of heritage was fought. The Heritage Conservation Society of Manila alone was not with many shows. The absence of any action from her only made clear what was more important to her—the political gain and to hell with history. For that, GMA already had her 1-year-2004.

GMA's modus operandi, in fact, speaks volumes of her unthinking use of political accommodation. She attempted to put Leily Shahani to as chair of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts—despite the obvious disqualification of qualifications for the post. Obviously, GMA meant to pay her political debts to Shahani's brother, Jolibee Ramos.

What is more dismal than GMA's cultural heritage record was her stance on the things heritage are destruction in Winchester. An article I had written as an opportunity to her caught her attention over after the issue was published. And even when it caught national media attention did the more profound, sending the Cabinet officers for northern Mindanao, agriculture's Cito Lacorte, to talk to no-show the issue.

"I by President wanted to know what she can do about the issue" was Lacorte's opening line to me. I had no doubts about Lacorte, an old friend, who I know has a very good personal grasp of Filipino cultural heritage appreciation. But the buck does not stop with him. The buck stops with GMA and on the second time that Lacorte called before a meeting, a head GMA aide substituting for Lacorte who was in the middle of an Islamic wedding, flatly told us that GMA cannot afford to import people who are not in her political line. Case closed, I remain. Then I recalled Arinaya, and dealer of Mehan Garden entered my mind. Everything became clear as crystal. Right there and there I knew that this Peryahan cared for nothing but 2004.

It is a record. GMA's track record is impressive for me, but then believe, in fact, Ermita was found guilty by the administrative court hearing the Subic issue as having destroyed the heritage site and, worse of all, not, among other penalties, a fine of P50,000, which to this day he has not bothered to pay. For GMA to close her eyes on the blatant violation of cultural laws by a city mayor she personifies an obvious mass issue for her in 2004 but just the final proof of where her heart lies.

Still, I have had news for her. She will not win over in Ermita's turf, who is known for his despotic bent in Cagayan de Oro and whose methods are not unlike those of Marcos. Ermita's radio station has become the butt of jokes. To me, the GMA + Ermita equation is nothing but equal to barrage destruction. And I strongly recommend to all who understand the social-capital value of cultural heritage that those are people who do not deserve our votes.

Revenge from the convergence of the planets can overtake us that two officials with such obvious disregard for our heritage can keep up a high-level position in government. Ironically, for the day before Ermita defied the law to proceed with the inauguration of the bridge built on the Dalupa heritage site area, GMA was thousands of miles away in Paris delivering a speech at the United National Institute of the Peace.

In her speech, GMA was effective in her praise to the Chirac for helping cultural preservation to the Philippines. GMA's speech was in fact passionate and by concepts such as cultural diversity, multiculturalism, cultural preservation, cultural tradition, knowledge society, etc. Nothing wrong with that, except for the irony of it. Little did those Parisian people know that this was an advocate of cultural terrorism who was speaking before them. Little did they know that this was a person who had a very poor grasp of cultural heritage preservation. Little did they know that this was somebody who once told the Spanish ambassador to Manila not to fund historical restoration projects because he was only into roads and bridges instead. A President who does not see the tandem role of development and cultural heritage is one for the archaic books and therefore has no business remaining plausible than like her protégé Ermita, up a rather long shot.

GMA will not get my vote in 2004.

* * *

Comments: to montalvan@post.ph

Digital 'dagdag bawas'—a nonpartisan issue

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

GRAFFITI in a Massachusetts Institute of Technology restroom: "People are smarter than computers, but computers are smarter than programmers. There are 10 kinds of people, those who understand binary arithmetic and those who do not."

"Software" is how people get machines to do things for them. Software is a program, which is a series of instructions or commands, for example, the electronic calculator runs on a simple whole of logic and mathematics that lets me add and subtract numbers knowing the answers will be correct. How can I be so sure? Well, I've used the calculator enough to trust it, along with millions of others, without apparent errors.

The Commission on Elections will use automated counting machines to tally paper ballots in the May elections, and a referendum on automated elections is necessary to fill, along with Cha of the data. Yet, with only five months to go, the application software packages for that crucial democratic exercise—several hundred thousand lines of sources and opaque codes—has not yet been delivered to the public for their form. Comelec Chair Ben Abalos admitted last week.

My jaw dropped in amazement. Having built software for General Electric Co.'s medical systems division and military aircraft engines division (as an aerospace engineer), I learned the hard and painful way that 90 percent of unintended bugs, or problems with complex software, lies in the last 10 percent of the code produced. From experience, I can assure you now with metaphysical certainty that software bugs are inevitable. Assuming that software know whether it will actually work as intended on May 10, much less guarantee it, simply put, the proposed software hasn't been developed yet. Another factor: initial code typically not verified to comply with specifications.

The Comelec's full page ads claiming that its system cannot be hacked because prime number encryption algorithms are used, only scares me more. It is the Comelec claiming it has an infallible way of developing what the software actually contains/

Cleaning, incompetence or errors could be on the minds without the knowledge of the Comelec or even the vendors, Konica's BE and Accenture Inc.'s smart. But if it is, the Comelec must insist on how the system's integrity. Omnigate you over a bank. You need software to run it. If you will accept software based on functional demos only, some will do it for free, because they can take all your money at a time of their choosing.

The unspoken enemy IT professionals that the administration might draw opinion be dispelled unless the Comelec undertakes certain global "best practices and procedures" for election critical software like Digital's computer and network for safe, bullet-proof telecommunications. Why? Because only a single programmer is needed to insert either bits of invisible digging boom-code, or to sabotage the entire system so that there would be a hobby of confusion. Such hacking can happen intentionally or because of inevitable flaws in mainframe and supercom software.

For let me give you an example of intentional machines next May. If I am writing the software for the machine that "reads" your ballot, I can, of course, cheating would be easy. I can condition two pieces of software, one that operates as expected (program A), another that cheats (program B). Then buried in the hundreds of thousands of lines of codes, I can put a simple switch that decides which of the two programs actually runs based on the card-reat date. Three fifty liters of invisible ink would do it. Date: Read Condition: If Date = May 10 run program B. Else run program A. Now voila the "simple code" is embedded in public circuitry, such "malware" would be printed of ink dissolved in the Pacific Ocean. The program behaves properly before election day, but runs differently on it. There are ways to defeat that date-triggered cheat, but I can think of dozens more, just as sneaky if we cannot look at the source code. Only full transparency will deter cheating.

I am not saying such an operation is underway, but all candidates, political parties and the general public should demand that the Comelec adopt a process of testing, acceptance, implementation and verification of the software to ensure independence, dependence and credible. Candidates can already review and question the source code. They should have the same oversight rights over the optical scanners and counting machines as well. The process of leading it into the machine, saving it there and verifying the results with a paper audit trail. Voting must be done not only in the functional level but also at the logical level of the source code itself, which I strongly suggest the Comelec should make available to the public. Certainly our voters are as valuable as our money and deserve equal if not greater protection than digital dagdag bawas and the graffiti scaring this issue.

Finally, do not forget the low-tech issue of educating the public. Most voters do not know that writing down the names of candidates is one. They will unquestionably ink in little circles, instead. And don't fold or squish the data ballot if you want your vote counted. (Visit my website http://dmitrogobocobo.blogspot.com/)

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We all must do our part

Ten years ago I had the privilege of joining a six-year exchange student program in Japan. It was during the time when I realized how much the Philippines has to lag behind as a nation. Seeing how Japan was so clean and orderly, how everybody was consistently disciplined made me so envious of their culture that I was scared to renounce my nationality. I just couldn't help but compare the people and problems in our own country. And it became obvious to me why we still remain a Third World nation. Not that time, I was ashamed to be a Filipino.

I came back with a negative attitude toward our country. Most I was pleased the rest stayed unpleasant. I took a deep breath of gratitude as and never to myself that after I finish my law academic in college I would immediately leave this country, my motherland, and look again.

My views about change during the last five months in college. The greatest lesson University I was looked up to was more just a school with indispensable equipment and good facilities. The longer I stayed in the country, the more I realized is there. But for some reason, as if I was standing still. I failed to realize my responsibilities for the second hand roses. This job, are an other option but to work here while waiting for the same opportunities.

Just a few weeks ago, I was invited to attend a meeting with friends from college. I am glad I know that it would change my outlook in life completely. During the meeting, everybody spent all complimented talk about being a Filipino and how we should love our country. I was amazed to discover that there are people who, in spite of receiving scanned offers to work and live abroad, still choose to stay and be useful in the Philippines. Probably the reason that influenced me the most during that time were, "I believe God made me a Filipino for a purpose, if He intended me to be an American, then He should have made my parents Americans." Why did I get hooked, yes it should be. I realized what left the table. I had been looking at things from the wrong angle. Instead of looking life as an to-do-list-first, we'll should we make to have our contribution to our country, rather it should give in hope that if other countries can do it, then we can too.

If everybody take how the opportunity to improve ourselves would just pack up and leave, there we have nowhere else to go but down. The fate of this country lies in the hands of its people. We should stop blaming all our misfortunes on our government, after all, we were the ones who voted and placed them in positions. The blame is ours.

There will never be a super president who will solve all the nation's problems. No matter how intelligent or competent he or she may be, as long as the nation is corrupt and as long as the people with the competence for a better economy there all the governments promises will just remain as campaign.

Every Filipino became a Filipino for a purpose. If parents will only take responsible and love-abiding children, if teachers will only commit their respective professions, if only politicians would consider policies over personal desires, if businessmen would only be honest in all their transactions, if everyone would just do their part for a better society, no matter how small it may be, and really strive, only then will we be able to take the first step on nation building.

—CLAUDIA LIM TECSON,
#716 Bangkal St., San Lorenzo,
Las Piñas, Legazpi

LETTERS

Going overboard in honoring Pacquiao

Congratulations to boxer Manny Pacquiao, the new Filipino boxing hero, deserves all the accolades and honor bestowed upon him by a grateful nation. He has put the Philippines in the limelight all over the world which our government-hired propagandists have failed to do despite spending millions of pesos in the process.

However, the President Macapagal-Arroyo and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, to give him P1 million and a condo worth P500,000, is an overkill. While sentiments are okay awarding to the poor and the family owner of whose names even we share, experts needs a star! The latest survey of the Social Weather Stations reveal that 52 percent of the population lives per poor.

Giving P1 million and a condo to Pacquiao is sure the way to lose in 2004. The President could have donated this amount to alleviate the conditions of the poor or build housing units for them. Mayor Atienza could have used this money to build playgrounds for disadvantaged kids. Their two could have started clean projects after Pacquiao to leave our new heading here.

But it seems to me that our political leaders just don't get it. They can't seem to believe that the country is in dire economic straits. They are so fixated on a quick get-rich initiative with persons who can influence their image in the eyes of the public to win votes during the elections. Their actions show great insensitivity to the needs of the poor. Our political leaders talk big about understanding the plight of the poor, but it's all talk.

President Macapagal and Mayor Atienza could turn on the sympathy by giving the money to the poor who could have used it to start their own livelihood

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bongcayao

3 killed in plane crash in Isabela

By Sharmot Vinuya Jr.
PDN Northern Luzon Bureau
and Christian V. Figueroa

ILAGAN, Isabela—TWO Air Force captains and a spotfisher were killed on Saturday afternoon when a six-seater commercial airplane crashed off the mountain ranges in the coastal town of Dinapigue, Isabela, reports from the provincial civil defense office said.

Area personnel rescuers, Isabela civil defense officers, identified the fatalities as Capt. Leonardo Melvic Aglibut, Capt. Melvin Reyes, engineer, and Mario Valdez, chief mechanic of the plane owned by the Cleanwood Corp. based in Tuguegarao City.

Investigators were still determining the cause of the crash but plane owner Manny Bandalan, chair of the board of Cleanwood, said the accident could have been caused by bad weather.

Bandalan said it was raining when Melo Reyes, and Valdez took off on the Tuguegarao-to-Cauayan airport around 30 minutes after they arrived there from the Tuguegarao airport.

A report from the National Disaster Coordinating Council said the twin-engine, high-wing plane crashed at least two miles west of Dibutunan sitio.

Maj. Gen. Raimundo Ibagusa, commander of the Army's 5th Infantry Division, said martial assessment and post-visibility in the crash site had hampered retrieval operations.

Air control tower operators in Cauayan City and Tuguegarao failed to receive radio signals from Melo a few minutes after take-off. The plane was supposed to land at the Palanan airstrip after a 45 minute flight from Tuguegarao, he said.

Residents in Barangay Dicaluan in Dinapigue saw the plane crashing in an upland area in the village, residents said. The crash site is about 45 km from the Palanan airstrip.

Reports said the plane was scheduled to pick up passengers in Palanan.

Maj. Bernardo Padilla, the Base information officer, said the bodies of Melo Reyes, and Valdez were not immediately recovered due to bad weather that made the aerial search very much more difficult. The regional and provincial disaster coordinating councils have formed core the bodies to the 405th Infantry Battalion.

Prior to the accident, Bandalan said his companies had been using the passenger plane for 10 years.

"All the flights of the service had any problems with the airplane," he told the Inquirer. "So, I suspect that the crash was caused by bad weather, not by engine trouble or pilot's error."

Padilla also described the Cessna 206 as "dependable though old." He said the Air Force used three ground aviation aircrafts from the late 1970s until they were retired in the early 90s. They are now being used by the Philippine Navy.

At least 35 people have been killed in plane crashes in Isabela since 1990, reports said.

Dinapigue sits on the coastal side through a 60-minute light plane trip or through an eight-hour boat trip from Sto. Ana, Cagayan.

Judge restrains Ombudsman from enforcing order on graft

ILOILOCITY, SAMAR CITY—A judge in Samarpanel province restrained the Ombudsman Ombudsman from enforcing its order directing provincial officials to suspend the graft charges filed against them.

Judge Jaime Infante of the Regional Trial Court 6 in Allen issued the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) on Friday.

Infante also directed the Ombudsman for Mindanao to submit its position paper within 10 days and explain why an injunction order should not be issued against it.

The Ombudsman has earlier ordered then Mayor Eusebio Vivo Gov. Felipe Constantino and several other officials to submit their counter-affidavits on charges of misconduct in the disbursement of funds to cooperatives and ghost projects.

The charges were filed by the Sanggunian Panlalawigan (Provincial Board) and Provincial Legal Officer Jovel Lichauco by Mr. Fred Magbanua.

In its complaint, Samar Governor claimed that about P51 million in government funds had been illegally disbursed from January to December last year.

Only about P1 million of the total amount had been accounted for.

Instead of complying with the Ombudsman's directive, Eusebio and the other accused officials ran to Infante.

Magbanua insisted the issuance of the TRO he said under the Constitution, the court has no jurisdiction over the Ombudsman.

Magbanua also cited the June 1999 Supreme Court ruling, which directed lower courts to exercise "utmost caution, prudence and circumspection in (the) issuance of restraining order and preliminary injunction" in graft cases involving government officials.

The circular cited Section 14 of Republic Act No. 6770, or the Ombudsman Act of 1989, which provided that "no writ of injunction shall be issued to delay any investigation being conducted by the Ombudsman . . . unless there is prima facie evidence that the subject matter . . . is outside the jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombudsman."

Aguilar Zeroes, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Resort workers in NBI's bungled work hit slow progress of case

By Johnny Rukenkrot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The resort workers who were victimized by the bungled operation by the agents of the National Bureau of Investigation were crying for justice again as they marked the first year anniversary of the bloody shooting incident.

Sanchez Gregorio, Nesario Castillon, Cesar Capulen, Ernesto Bador and Alfie Pernandez reportedly sighted a candle on the spot where they were wounded, to show disgust over the slow progress of the multiple homicide and attempted murder filed against the agents and celebrated agents of NBI-Cebu.

One of the resorters, Michael Almanzol, who now works for another hotel in Cebu, was in Manila to celebrate his birthday with his family but he made sure his sentiment was known when he sent a text message to Inquirer. Had he shared their dream to seek justice.

The victims, all employees of the Plantation Bay Resort in Mangodlong, Lapu-Lapu City, were on their way home from a Christmas party on Dec. 13 when they were chased and fired upon by NBI agents who mistook them for drug pushers.

Six of the resort workers are heard the van were wounded. Only Fernandez was subject during the bloody shoot-out. Lover, Mandaue City, is bleeding. Cebu City. Bador found the vehicle riddled with 37 bullet holes.

NBI agent Angelito Magno and special investigators Aaron Pena, Teodoro Encarnacion, Ray Tamadea and Danilo Garay are now facing charges in court, along with their bosses considered agents.

The Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas also ordered the agents detained after finding them administratively liable for grave misconduct.

But Magno and the rest of the NBI investigators have since been reinstated after the Court of Appeals granted their petition for preliminary injunction.

Gregorio, the resort's public relations associate, said they were disappointed because the case has been dragging in court. She said the prosecution has not even presented their first witness after the defense filed several motions that dragged out the case.

"I am a bit disappointed. It has had delays but it's in the Philippines so it cannot be hurried," she lamented.

Gregorio said they remained angry that the NBI agents involved in the bungled operation had not shown even a hint" that they were sorry for what happened.

Gregorio said they have recovered from the wounds they sustained but remained traumatized by the incident.

"I still feel unsafe every time I get out from the resort. I still feel that," Helen said.

"It won't leave me . . . the fiasco and that are there. I feel I am not safe. To the NBI agents, especially since I've read in the papers that they are back. I hope you would do your job better this time. Don't conduct the same mistake again," Fernandez said.

Gregorio said two dogs and one aplanse were not removed from his back. He said he sometimes found it hard to breathe and still experiences pain in his lower back and lower half part of his abdomen.

Bandalan, the resort's owner, aware of the event, urged for a speedy disposition of the case and justice for the victims.

"Genuinely it's disappointing that not much has been done. Their lawyers have been working very hard in this case," he said.

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Leyte town mayor ordered suspended for misconduct

By Jolette R. Gutierrez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The Office of the Ombudsman in the Visayas (OMB-Visayas) ordered the 30-day suspension of a town mayor on Leyte after he was found guilty of simple misconduct for refusing to renew the business permit of a local ship-chandler.

Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Primo Miro directed William Dale, Department of Interior and Local Government director for Eastern Visayas, to implement the suspension order against Mayor Rubelio Fuentes of Isabel town.

Miro upheld the findings of Graft Investigation Officer Estrellanore Melendres that the mayor took the law in his own hands when he refused to renew the business permit of Pe Ventenilla.

Ventenilla, owner of Triple A Chandling and General Maritime Services, is engaged in ship chandling services in the Port of Isabel, Leyte from 1993 to 2001.

She applied for a renewal of her business permit in 2002 but Fuentes denied the application and forward other ship chandlers instead, she said.

Fuentes denied Ventenilla's allegation. He said he refused Ventenilla's application after receiving information that the businesswoman had been involved in banned drugs.

Fuentes had also assured the cancellation of Ventenilla's special permits of the Philippine Ports Authority and Bureau of Customs to engage in ship-chandling services.

In a decision, Graft officer ruled that Fuentes acted with malice in refusing to renew Ventenilla's business permit.

He said the application was ready for the mayor's signature as early as January 2002 while the reports from the confidential agents came in February and March.

Atty. Wenilo Yanur, Isabel police chief, also issued a certification that the complainant was never involved in illegal activities in their area.

UNSAINTLY CLAUS
Human rights advocates in Baguio City raise a mock "naughty and nice list" by a Santa Claus that telegraphs not joy but "horror" on people, during the Human Rights Day commemorations last week.

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ROUNDUP

P1M for veggie council

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet—The provincial board has allocated P1 million for the operations of the Benguet vegetable council that will ensure the commercial viability of the local vegetable industry. Board Member Antonio Ortiz Jr. said the council would set up a commodity that would address various issues confronting vegetable farmers such as high production cost, price manipulation and marketing.
Arthur Abuatan /PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Worker electrocuted

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A worker in a private construction company was electrocuted while he was working near a passageway of the University of Baguio (UB) there on Tuesday night. Police said engineer Ruel Dulfatan suffered third-degree burns on the right shoulder and was taken to the Cagayan Valley Medical Center, the region's biggest hospital, for treatment. Police arrested Dulfatan's employer, identified as Rudy Ringgit, 35, after the incident. Reports said Dulfatan just came from UB when Ringgit called him at 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday.
Vhal Ramos /PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Bishop on death penalty

TUGUEGARAO CITY—Bishop Jose Angel Pabalan of Iba, Zambales, a member of the Permanent Council of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), has urged Congress to reject the proposal to restore the death penalty in the country.

Pabalan, who is also chairman of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care, said the death penalty is not the solution to the country's problem on criminality.

"We should realize that the death penalty is not the solution to the problem of criminality," he said.

"Instead, we should address the root causes of criminality, like poverty, unemployment, lack of education and other social problems," he said.
Evangeline Calma, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Gordon's 'moving' idea

OLONGAPO CITY—Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon said there is a need to decongest Metro Manila by developing the tourism potentials in Central and Northern Luzon. Gordon, the Cabinet Officer for Regional Development for Central Luzon, said the government plays a major part in such a decongestion since because it will mean to develop the infrastructure in provinces and then encourage people to move out of the metropolis.

Metro Manila will stop, as jobs will be available in the two regions, he said.
PDI Central Luzon Desk

Village chiefs' incentives

SUBIC CITY OF OLONGAPO—During the month, barangay captains in Luzon will receive P500 each monthly to help in the peace and law enforcement efforts in their communities.

The measure was announced recently by President Macapagal-Arroyo during the launch here of the "Kalusugan Alagaan Kalye" project of the Department of Public Works and Highways. "The most important aspect of this project is its economic value," Mr. Macapagal-Arroyo said. She said Marinette of national road would be cleaned and maintained by barangay officials in the area. The total length of the national roads to be covered is 31,000 kilometers.
Jonathan Magsaysay, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Suspected pusher killed

LUCENA CITY—A suspected drug pusher was shot and killed by a still unidentified suspect inside his home in Barangay 4 this town on Dec. 12. Victim Reno Cleto, 30, who operates a "sari-sari" store in Barangay 4 this town on Dec. 12. Victim Reno Cleto, 30, who operates a "sari-sari" store in Barangay 4 this town on Dec. 12. Victim Reno Cleto, 30, who operates a "sari-sari" store in Barangay 4 this town on Dec. 12.
Evangeline Calma, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

NPA leader captured

SUBIC CITY—A reputed New People's Army (NPA) leader in Southern Mindanao was captured Tuesday night in a remote village in this city.

Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil, the military commander, said Friday 11 Oct. Hernando Abenir, commander of the Army's 56th Infantry Battalion based in the province, said incident was arrested Felipe Maloloy in Sitio Upper Bandalagang Barangay Cawa I in said Maloloy, 35, known as the Regional Commander 24, yielded a .45 caliber pistol with five rounds of ammunition and a fragmentation grenade when arrested. Abenir said Maloloy was responsible for the March 5 attack on a police detachment in Bunawan town that wounded a policeman.
Anthony Giducos, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Bishop says there's hope in fight against jueteng

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DAGUPAN CITY— There's hope in the fight against jueteng after all.

Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz said 120 government and police officials unconsolable made it to the "Pinangal ya sina Hesukristo" assembly given on Dec. 4 by the Diocesan Lihim sa Jueteng Lo-operations with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines.

"This is more than double the number of assemblies last April, which were only 75. Other means that more officials are joining the war against jueteng," Cruz said.

Two assemblies from Pangasinan, however, said they had never allowed the illegal numbers game in their towns since they were elected mayors and were before the festivals was launched last year.

Bani Mayor Gabriel Navarro and Burgos Mayor Dominga Davies said they oppose jueteng because it corrupts people and destroys families.

"It's so simple. We don't support jueteng. It's the poor people who usually bet even their last money. We don't want it and it can be done," Davies said.

Both Navarro and Davies admitted that when they first became mayors, jueteng lords "visited" but were had asked them if they could operate jueteng in their towns.

"I did not give them a chance to explain and told them, 'Kung mayor mahalaga (you want to be called),' and they never came. Those others came saying the same thing. I also refused to take their offers. What was it said was it was I, the mayor, who pleaded with them not to come here," Navarro, a lawyer, said.

He said he did not know how much money was offered "and I don't want to know because I may be tempted to answer it."

Davies, also a lawyer and who worked with the Office of the Ombudsman, said he was offered P35,000 monthly, a big amount for a fifth class town like Burgos.

He said he declined "because I may use the money for my personal needs."

"It's not true that once a mayor gets hold of the money, it will be spent entirely on EDL (food, hospitalization or marriage, baptism and burial) needs of the mayor's constituents. Besides, every mayor has a social welfare fund, which is open for medicines and other needs of the people. This is what I spend for my needy constituents," Davies said.

Navarro said the people of Bani "were not enticed" to ask local officials for their every need "except when many people suddenly get sick."

"I want dwell on the reasons given by some mayors why they allow jueteng in their towns. I don't need money to give to my constituents. If I need a wedding and I have a gift, then it's okay. If I don't have money, I say point-blank that I don't have a gift," he said.

Cruz said a group of barangay councilors from Mangaldan town was also cited in the "Pinangal para sa Hesukristo."

But a recent survey conducted by the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan showed that jueteng has resurfaced in 10 towns that the archdiocese covers.

"The result is definitely worse than the past surveys and this could perhaps be because of the May 2004 elections when all candidates are gathering campaign funds, legitimately or illegitimately," Cruz said.

23 Laguna cops awarded for foiling robbery gang

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Twenty-three policemen from Laguna received recognition last Wednesday in a ceremony held at this camp for their gallantry in subduing a robbery syndicate in a daring gun battle with the group's mastermind in San Gregorio.

Senior Supt. Napoleon Cachuela, director for administration of the Calabarzon police, said Chief Inspector Jose Mario Nieto, the Cavinti police chief, and 22 of his men were responsible for the arrest of four members of a band of robbers specializing small business firms in Laguna and nearby provinces.

They received the Medalya ng Kagitingan (Medal of Bravery), Cachuela said. suspects Ronald and Pacifico Rivas, with four others, removed aroll phone cards last Nov. 18 and looted it of several cellular phones and accessories and P50,000 cash. Policemen who were asked for help requested immediately. Marlon Ramos, PDI Dasi Sierra Laguna Bureau

Saddam . . .

Background, A-1

that Red Dawn," Istanbul said.

Targeted in the strike, Saddam was in a room eight feet deep "spider hole" that had been camouflaged with bricks and dirt. The soil, dirt and rock from the hole, uncongested and found him inside, Istanbul said.

The strike cleared an air zone and his aides the hole to allow Saddam to remain hidden for an extended period.

Two men "affiliated with Saddam Hussein" were destroyed with him, and soldiers confiscated two Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, a cell and $750,000 in $100 bills, Istanbul said.

"I'm very happy for the Iraqi people. Life is going to be safer now," said 35-year-old Sabra Hussein, a resident of Baghdad. "Now we can start a new beginning."

Earlier in the day, rumors of the capture sent people streaming into the streets of Kirkuk, southern Iraq's city, firing guns in the air in celebration.

"We are celebrating like it's a wedding," said Kirkuk resident Mustapha Hamdi. "He was finally ruled that criminal."

"This is the joy of a lifetime," said Ali al-Rashid, another resident. "I am speaking on behalf of all the people that suffered under his rule."

In Shrill, US soldiers lit up sky after hearing the news of Saddam's capture.

"The infantryman and how this now generated for over 30 years are now gone," said Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, who commands the division that carried out the raid.

Despite the celebrations throughout Baghdad, many residents were skeptical.

"I heard the news, but I'll believe it when I see it," said Shehamed al-Mosali, 33. "They need to show us that they really have him."

Bert Bremer, 58, soldiers had of a dream with his 9-year-old son. "Things will be better for my son," she said. "Everyone says everything will be better when Saddam is caught. My son now has a future."

From Siding, US commanders have said Saddam played some role in the anti-US resistance that has killed hundreds of soldiers and civilians in Iraq. In the latest attack, a suspected suicide bomber detonated explosives in a car outside a police station Sunday morning west of Baghdad, killing at least 18 people and wounding 33 more, the US military said.

After invading Iraq on March 20 and setting up their headquarters in Saddam's sprawling Republican Palace compound in Baghdad, US troops launched a massive manhunt for the fugitive leader, placing a $25-million bounty on his head and sending thousands of soldiers in search for him.

Saddam was one of the most-wanted fugitives in the world, along with Osama bin Laden, the leader of the al-Qaida terror network who hasn't been caught despite a manhunt since November 2001, when the Taliban regime was overthrown in Afghanistan. AP

Ople dies in Taiwan

From page A-1

Aaron Ilagan, Commissioner Bautista from Dec. 11 to 13. He was to change planes in Hongkong and fly to Bhutan, Bahrain, to join Mr. Bhagapati on his two-day official visit to the Middle East country which has a large expatriate Filipino community.

Philippine Ambassador to Bahrain Edmundo Binghay and Mr. Bhagapati was pushing through with her visit to sign a series of cooperation agreements between Manila and Manama.

The DFA Embassy also sent its condolences to Ople's family, calling the foreign minister's death an "immeasurable loss to the nation of a great political and statesman."

Congress was to fly the flag at half-staff on Monday and a resolution would be introduced to praise Ople's government achievements, Senate President Franklin Drilon said.

In Malacañan, people brought flowers and candles to Ople's home in Bonanza Sta. Monica, Balanga, where they heard of the foreign secretary's death.

Cups of coffee

Journalists and fellow officials remembered Ople as a man who loved to discuss the intricacies of regional and global diplomacy over cups of black coffee, usually made of cigarette smoke.

"I'm surprised how the government's anti-smoking ban, Ople who's against anything Mr. weekly news conference on Dec. 13. "Cigarettes and coffee are the only things that are keeping me alive, and I hope these simple pleasures would not be denied to us old months me."

Despite a mild stroke in 2000 and a bout of pneumonia and had enough in recent months, Ople attended international conferences, when he relaxed them.

Ople who only 49 years old when then President Ferdinand Marcos appointed him labor secretary in September 1975. Ople also headed the Ministry of Labor and Employment during martial law years until the ouster of the dictator in the 1986 "People Power" Revolution.

In 1986, then President Corazon Aquino appointed Ople to the 47-member Constitutional Commission that drafted the new Philippine Constitution.

Ople began serving as an opposition senator in 1995, and became Senate president briefly in mid-1999. He relinquished his Senate post in July but rose when Mr. Bhagapati appointed him foreign secretary, replacing Mrs. Blanded Teodoro Gonzales, with whom the President had a spat over his opposition to the US military presence in the country.

Despite his frail health, Ople handled major foreign policy issues including the Philippines' decision to allow American reconnaissance robot training forces in the country, a 60-with Malaysia over its crackdown on Filipinos alleged religious sects, and Manila's support of the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Ople led moves to up-grading a pact with Washington called the Visiting Forces Agreement, which allowed the resumption of large-scale US military exercises and port visits in the Philippines. Left-wing groups denounced him for his pro-American inclinations.

Ople was also a vocal participant in the lengthy, occasionally crossfire between Association of Southeast Asian Nations, leading democratic reformers and the reluctant four former users of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi to military-ruled Burma (Myanmar).

Ople was born on Feb. 3, 1927 to working class parents. His father was a cashier man who repaired boats in Hagonoy, a fishing town on the Manila Bay coast. His mother ran the family store.

Ople is married to the former Soraya Respicio. They have seven children. Ilfan reports by Rimsky Ocampo, FOI Counsel Jason Barrios, and Inquirer wires.

SUBANG: Ople, the widow of Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, steps out of a ward of Taiwan's Hsinchong hospital in the northern Taoyuan county, after a Mass was said for her by a Catholic priest (left). AP

From colorful journalist . . .

From page A-1

allegations. He sponsored with three firm, Elvida Management devices the satisfaction of the bilateral agreement on Tariff and Trade at the Uruguay Round that created the World Trade Organization.

Even so, his colleagues in politics and government service had nothing but praise for the man.

"The extremely shock of Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, reformer senator and former labor secretary leaves a void in our society which will be very hard to fill," said Vice President Teofisto Guingona whom Ople replaced as Foreign secretary last year.

Guingona, who had a falling out with Estrada and Macapagal-Arroyo for his opposition to her pro-US policies, said Ople had died "with his boots on and in the service of the nation."

Speaker Jose de Venecia hailed Ople as "one of the great Foreign ministers of Asia and one of the four greatest statesmen of the Philippines." He ranked Ople with Apolinario Mabini, Carlos P. Romulo and Raul Manglapus.

"Secretary Ople was sensitive to policy making and in this sense was also a consummate politician," De Venecia said. "It will take another hundred years before we can have another Blas Ople."

Singaporean's Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar said he was "deeply moved by the demise of Ople, whom he described as a good friend.

"He was a senior statesman with a long and distinguished record of service to the Philippines and Asean," Jayakumar said, saying that Ople was due to a visit to Singapore in January. "My passing is a deep loss for his country and the region," he added.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the country has lost a "national treasure . . . [whose] inspiration served of public service as a journalist, labor leader, labor minister, lawmaker and diplomat would usually be regarded by any contemporary Filipino."

Neurological service

Drilon said the Senate would pay today a resolution honoring Ople and hold a meeting of the session for him. Drilon, Congressmen takes to Chinatown hotel starting Thursday.

Senate Majority Leader Loren Legarda said she had learned from Ople "how best to serve the public interest in relations I do."

"To the end, he was a father to the OFWs whose work he does ability he made known to the world, as he paved the way for their overseas employment in a more humane, and fair relation he crafted many times as a senator," she said in a statement.

Senate Minority leader Sen. Renato Puno [illegible] Ople had served as his "inspiration and mentor" in his first years as a senator.

"Ople in the opposition did not begrudge him the right to serve the republic as foreign secretary of the administration for he established the dictum that loyalty to party ends where loyalty to country begins," Puno said in a statement.

Although he served as labor minister during the Marcos regime, he distanced himself from the Marcos families after the dictator's downfall in 1986. During the term of President Corazon Aquino, he served in the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1987 Constitution, which made it difficult for another president to declare martial law.

In 1991, Ople supported then President Joseph Estrada, who was toppled over allegations of corruption three years later.

Despite his association with Estrada and Bolcada, Ople was never linked to a corruption scandal in his public career.

Ople's brief tenure as a senior Cabinet official began in July last year when Mr. Macapagal plucked him from the Senate, where he held positions on several committees, overseeing some 110 international and bilateral treaties.

Biggest legacy

Ople's biggest legacy, however, will be his 1989 spearheading of a Senate resolution ratifying the Visiting Forces Agreement with Manila and Washington allowed for the resumption of large-scale joint military exercises. The accord was to eventually lead to the deployment of hundreds of US forces to help train Filipino soldiers to fight rebels like those [illegible] Mr. Bhagapati Hindustan as part of an emerging global axis of terrorism.

Ople also supported the US-led invasion of Iraq, and campaigned for the deployment of a small US spine contingent here.

At various times, Ople worked as a newspaperman, public relations practitioner and academic lecturer. At the time of his death, he wrote a newspaper column and was a contributor to several publications.

"He was a very colorful personality," another Southern Baptist told Reuters. "When he was a reporter, he would direct traffic in Manila streets."

And his love for people was well known. "When he was a younger man, there were times when he would not go home and would just sleep on a park bench because he had had one too many," Bridges added. Reports from Jaymark dela Peña, Norman Bordadora, Cecilia Balbo, Christine Amorsolo and Inquirer wires

Gains in log drive cited

By N. Bordadora

THE BIDDINGS of illegal logging in the country could be slashed by half, forestry undersecretary Hans Uytiepo foresees said seen the weekend.

Uytiepo foresees said seen the weekend.

Gozun made the bold prediction after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources reported a decrease in the reported incidence of illegal logging in the first half of the year.

The report showed that 3,720.67 cubic meters (cu. m.) of illegally cut logs had been seized as of June, with an estimated value of around P12.2 million, or only about 20 percent of the 12,957 cu. m. seized in 2002.

"A 50-percent reduction from last year's record is likely to be seen since the second quarter report covers practically the entire dry season, a period when illegal logging is at most active, especially during the summer months from March to June," Uytiepo said.

She said the DENR was optimistic of achieving its target because of its linkages with the police, military and civic groups.

As of June, Southern Mindanao had the highest record of illegal logging seizures with 2,200.94 cu. m. of confiscated logs worth P9.23 million, followed by Northern Luzon (284.7 cu. m., P1.2 million), and Cagayan (228 cu.m., P1.9 million).

Last year, Southern Mindanao topped the department's list again but for illegal logging activities with 7,207 cu. m. of seized lost logs valued at P9.9 million, followed by Northern Tagalog (1,388 cu. m., P6.2 million); and Cagayan (742 cu.m., P1.1 million).

Gozun disclosed that a total of 45,064 board feet of unlicensed illegally-cut logs, worth at least P1.3 million, was seized from Nov. 24 to Dec. 3. During the period, the DENR filed four cases against people for violating the Revised Philippine Forestry Code.

Some of the known personalities involved, including President Macapagal-Arroyo, has focused on the deficit, a critical issue for the new administration. While Schwarzenegger had a 10-point plan during the campaign, so he could be held accountable by the electorate, all the presidential aspirants have fudged the key economic issues.

Pay, among all of them, has only one thing to offer—his alleged high popularity in the opinion polls. He has evaded public appearances and scrutiny of his views and appearances. His handlers have shielded him from exposing his positions on key issues.

Popularity is neither policy nor program. Enabling rehabilitation, the fear of losing popularity, is a travesty of the time as an incentive for the people to make informed choices in elections to say. To offer popularity as a cure to economic and political woes is a quick-fix solution. Worse, it is no less revealed to inflict on the people a fraud—an illusion as a reduction.

home, since he is a high school dropout.

Moody's said that California's credit outlook remained negative, according to FT, based on risks that the state might have to refinance $34 billion of short-term notes and warrants that mature next June. "This is when California will run out of cash if nothing is done," says the report, quoting state officials.

"Given this, we expect the state to remain reliant on significant financial assistance from the capital markets," Moody's said, recalling that the recent moves to raise, not lower, the general fund's cash consumption was "not encouraging."

Ominous sign

Schwarzenegger's Democratic critics said Moody's downgrading "is an ominous sign that California is headed for a financial meltdown unless responsible actions are taken to balance our budget." A state treasurer said, "So far, the governor is going the wrong way. As Moody's indicated, he has deepened our budget deficits. And the governor's current proposals—a massive borrowing plan and a deficit spending cap—merely create the illusion of solutions."

From this core study, I am making two points: First, it takes more than best-effort popularity in the movies to solve staring economic problems (more of all, the ballooning Philippine deficits, let alone economic revival); secondly, hiring economic advisers is make up for deficiency in economic knowledge cannot wish away economic woes.

There is a fiscalist argument being moved by those demonstrating the importance of learning in the presidency that shortfalls can be supplied by a bunch of academically trained advisers. The argument is hopeless.

Schwarzenegger inherited the states deficit from the Democratic administration of Gov. Gray Davis. Davis was dismissed from the governorship in November's election called the "recall," a unique process unique only to California and another 18 state, because of the deficit problem. After the dismissal vote, Schwarzenegger was elected, together with 134 others, to compete for Davis' post.

RP context

In the Philippine context, although the Macapagal administration failed to rein in the fiscal deficit (indeed, it swelled under it), the deficit was instrumental. It was behutted from previous administrations plagued by the basic problem, resulting from revenue shortfalls and a political system that has no will to increase taxes.

Carnadine and some economists from the University of the Philippines' School of Economics recently pointed out that the country was gripped by a financial crisis which the political system—that existed common political will to impose bitter medicine to increase revenue...can't cope with.

Schwarzenegger's deepening deficit deflates the argument that good advisers would compromise for political ignorance. He don't have to look far for lessons. The chiefs of political and economic advisers (many of them UP academics recruited by Joseph Estrada) did not make up for his incompetence, which, to a certain extent, was aggravated by abominable corruption. So, advisers are not the answer to deficiency on the part of the executive.

Although the governor had a 10-point plan that he promised to implement by the end of his first 100 days, he paradoxically steered the seeds of escalating the deficit. He promised to repeal the unpopular car tax registration increases. The repeal would cost the state $4 billion and blast the estimated budget deficit to at least $12 billion.

Arnold's advisor

The governor hired as his top fiscal advisor, John Dugan, the conservative Stanford University economist who drafted President George W. Bush's tax cut proposal during the 2000 presidential campaign. Dugan had said that the tax cuts would not lead to deficits.

In preparing the governor's budget plan, Dugan faced a dilemma. Dugan has pointed out: "The choices are stark. We are set. Our going to solve this budget problem with higher taxes, which would be detrimental to California's future. Or we are going to paper over the problem and engaged in deficit spending that is economically irrational. Or we're going to solve it by reducing spending. If we choose the latter path California will have a much brighter future."

Dugan did not, however, specify where spending can cut. He is put in a bind for the governor's campaign promise to rule out reductions in elementary and secondary education. He acknowledges that deep budget cuts would be "tough medicine."

And, according to some reports, economists also worry that spending cuts would take money out of California's economy just when it is needed to help the state recover from recession.

'Mano Po 2' essay contest to bring winner to Shanghai

REGAL Entertainment Inc. invites all high school and college students nationwide to join the "Mano Po 2, My Home" essay writing contest.

The top prize is a trip to Hong Kong, China.

"Mano Po 2" aims to promote better understanding between the Filipino and Chinese cultures," says Regal's "Mother" Lily Monteverde. "This contest is in line with that goal. We hope to inspire and educate."

Contestants must write in 600-1,000 words their thoughts and reflections on "Mano Po 2, My Home."

First prize is a trip for three to Shanghai. Second prize is P75,000; fourth prize, P7,000; fifth prize, P5,000.

The contest starts Dec. 23, the opening of "Mano Po 2, My Home," and runs until Jan. 30, 2004.

For details, please refer to posters and other announcements at the playdate cinemas.

Regal has also lined up an exhibit of cast photographs by Jun. dor Angeles and the release of the "Mano Po 2" book.

"Mano Po 2, My Home," the official Regal entry in the 50th Manila Film Festival (MMFF), is the story of how a family comes together because of love.

It continues the legacy begun by the box office hit and award-winning "Mano Po," from the 2002 MMFF.

Directed by Erik Matti and written by Ray Iglesias, "Mano Po 2" has an all-star cast: Sunat Rocco, Christopher de Leon, Lorna Tolentino, Zoe Zoe Padilla, Eric Aquino, Judy Ann Santos, Jay Manalo, Carmina Villaroel, Alessandra de Rossi, Cogie Domingo, Richard Gutierrez, Chynna Ortaleza, Angel Locsin.

'MANO PO 2, MY HOME' hopes to inspire, educate

'Filipinas' is about family and country

UNITED BY LOVE. Aernela Signino-Reyna (middle, second row) leads the cast as the matriarch of the Filipinas family.

"FILIPINAS," Nina Hilsa' entry in the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival, is a grand family drama featuring the biggest and brightest stars of Philippine cinema. Directed by Joel Lamangan from a script by Ike Iglesias.

Filipinas is the romance of the family in the story, but it may as well refer to the country. Like the country, the family goes through trying and tumultuous times.

Maricel Soriano, Richard Gomez, Dawn Zulueta, Alice Montalvez, Victor Neil and Randell Ramos play the children of Aerneli Signino-Reyna, a widowed former school principal who keeps her family together despite overwhelming odds.

Also starring are Raymond Bagatsing, Andrea del Rosario, Serafine Dizon, Tanya Garcia, Anne Curtis and Isaiah Bermudez-Lamangan. Aerneli debut Sarah also sings the movie's theme song, "Pinoy Ito Magagawa Natin."

The story of "Filipinas" is told from the point of view of the characters of Maricel, the devoted daughter who remains loyal to her mother even when she hurt her siblings have betrayed her.

The Filipinas children are divided by ambition, principle and geography. Deep-seated hurts and clashing egos and interests divide them, leaving their mother broken-hearted. A tragedy on the family on Christmas, the season of joy, hope and peace, and keeps the family praying and staying together.

"Filipinas" is a collaboration of Lamangan and Iglesias, the same behind "Mano Po," the top-grosser and big winner in the 2003 Metro Manila Film Festival.

Maricel, Richard, Dawn, Alice, Raymond and Armiela have all been honored by the Urian, academy, Star, Parent, Young Critics Circle, Metro Manila Film Fest and Manila Filmfest for previous performances.

Jun's "The Contemplation Story," also from Nina, won best picture and best actress (Nora Aunor) honors at Cairo international film festival.

Disney Channel gets in holiday mode

DISNEY Channel is showing programs meant to make the holiday season even more exciting.

The Studio D line-up on Saturdays and Sundays (9:30 to 11 a.m. just got better with new episodes of "Proud Family" and the introduction of "Sabrina, The Animated Series."

In the new season of "Proud Family," 9th-grader Penny Proud and her overprotective parents, annoying siblings and the endless hours at schoolwork. In "Sabrina," the well-known witch is seen as a 12-year-old without full access to her powers and spells but is just as adorable and full of mischief.

The new non-stop adventures of "Undutiful to Bunny" are on weekdays, 3-4:30 p.m.

On the "Wonderful World of Disney" join Elmer, the loveable six-year-old resident of New York's Plaza Hotel in "Elmer at the Plaza," Dec. 28, 7:30 p.m. Elmer is always causing mischief and mayhem, often dragging a beleaguered nanny (Julie Andrews) along for the ride.

Things get even better from Christmas week onwards with Disney Channel specials starting with "Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol," the classic tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and his evening with the three ghosts (dig-a-ride lovable characters Bob Cratchit and his ailing son Tiny Tim. The remains tale airs on Christmas Eve, 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day at 7:30 p.m. has "Beauty and the Beast: Enchanted Christmas," the sequel to the Academy Award-nominated "Beauty and the Beast."

SHOW TIME

On Dec. 27 at 7:30 p.m., catch the Annie TV premiere of "Lilo and Stitch." There's ewoks and plenty of laughter in paradise when Lilo, a lonely Hawaiian girl, wishes upon a falling star for someone to be her friend.

The rambunctious Stitch, a.k.a. Experiment 626, makes a comeback with "Stitch! The Movie" on New Year's Eve at 7:30 p.m. Stitch, Pleakley and Dr. Jumba are all part of the household now, but what Lilo and Stitch don't know is that Dr. Jumba also brought his batch of 625 experiments to earth. Evil scientist Dr. Hamsterviel and his henchmen, Captain Gantu, want the experiments back, so now it's up to Lilo and Stitch to rescue his alien cousins.

There's more. Follow the story of "Invader" on Dec. 22, the exploits of Buzz Lightyear and his friends in "Toy Story 2" on Dec. 23, the adventures of the "Snow Dogs" on Dec. 26, and more favorites "Hunchback of Notre Dame II" on Dec. 28.

Disney Channel also offers Disney's famed animated movies, series, specials, sitcoms, family dramas and live action movies and adventure movies.

Disney Channel Asia was established in 1998 and is available in Brunei, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore.

Vi: Running for gov...

From page A 12

her time to decide because "I also have other roles in life that are equally demanding and strong."

Last Friday, she said, "There is an third option anymore (not to run). We will announce our decision on Dec. 19, including the names of the 10 councilors who will be running on our ticket."

The mayor, known in the movie industry as the 'star for all' Seasons, said she has qualms about running for governor because "Talking over the whole Batangas is not a joke."

"I still have to have time for my family," she said. "My commitments in Lipa are used to this already, but can you expect the whole of Batangas to understand me, too?"

Mayor Vi is married to Sen. Ralph Recto, then a Batangas political duo. They have a 7-year-old son, Ryan Christian. The actress also has a son by actor Edu Manzano... Wowowin-victim host Luis Manzano, 22.

Recto was congressman of the fourth and largest district of Batangas from 1992 to 2001.

White flowers

The actress said the round-down invitations to run for public office thrice and only said yes when "I finally got the sign that I prepared for."

"I didn't know anything about politics," admitted the award-winning star who has been in the movies since she was 9. "I was really hesitant. I told God that I would run only if I get a sign. If someone would give me a white flower of any kind.

"The sign came when I was only a few minutes away from announcing my decision."

Mayor Vi said she was talking with her husband on the cell phone when she glanced at a makeshift altar in her house in Green Meadows, Quezon City. "Sans enough, there was a vase full of white daisies at the altar. I couldn't believe it. I had to run my conversation with Ralph because I became too distracted. I found out later on that my florist had sent them."

She took up a five-unit course in public administration at the University of the Philippines before she occupied the Lipa mayor's office. "My staff want me to school," she said. "We [studied] everything there is to know about Lipa."

She said she feels secure because her husband helps her decide what's best for her city. "He remains my senior adviser," she said. "Lipa City benefits from Ralph's being a senator. I get exclusive information about what is happening [at the Senate]."

The Rectos celebrated their 13th wedding anniversary last Dec. 11. They are leaving for the United States on Dec. 22 for a vacation.

"Ralph and I had been together for eight years before we got married," she said. "It's been 18 years now. We know better than to believe people who have nothing in mind but to destroy you marriage."

Mayor Vi said rumors of her husband's alleged womanizing do not affect her anymore. Just last October, the senator was reportedly seen in a swanky hotel resort in Shanghai, Hainan, with a woman believed to be a government official from Pagasa nightclub in Quezon City.

According to reliable sources, Recto and the QPO had been on a romantic rendezvous in a suite for two days, but a relative claimed Recto never went to the Shanghai resort and that in fact he and his actress wife were attending a Saturday dinner concert in Manila.

"I'm so mature," Mayor Vi said. "If ever there's an incident that I feel he has violated me as a wife, trust me, I will not keep quiet. But I know the truth."

When the Rectos return from their US trip on Jan. 7, Mayor Vi will be busy preparing for the Jan. 28 Lipa fiesta, one of the most celebrated events in the city.

"I enjoy what I'm doing right now," she said. "Most of the time, I put public service over my love for show biz."

MetroBriefs

P2B-M drugs seized

AT LEAST 10 kilos of suspected shabu were confiscated from two Chinese nationals during a buy-bust operation in Boston City the other night. In another group, the seized drugs could amount to P30 million. The suspected Chinese drug dealers whose identities were not available as of press time had been under surveillance following a tip from a police informant. On Saturday, the Metropolitan Capital Region Police Office's Intelligence and Investigation Division conducted a test-buy. A confidential ground as a buyer and met with the suspects in a mall in Tandang Sora, Boston City around 9 p.m. After paying the P500,000 in 1,000-peso notes, the suspects brought them to a nearby Project 8 in Commander Phillip Eduardo Morales said. There, the suspects opened a packed Toyota Revo and took a bag of suspected shabu inside. "They are a trained police working for a big one in the provinces. Edwin Fenton Jr.

Bow wow woes

MAYOR Orlando Antonio Rivera implementing the death penalty shortly after the inauguration killed. But no dog was targeting human inmates but stray animals, particularly dogs. Some 200 wandering canines have been picked up the streets and are now on death row, according to Municipal Mayor Tony Fangoro. Fangoro said the provided canines within public areas to better in shelters if they weren't reclaimed by their owners within three days. The mayor said he is to being conducted impromptu rabies and anti-tetanus shots to those bitten, especially now when rabies cases everybody is out roving streets for the holidays. Nino Ramirez

Thieves' haunt!

BE CAREFUL when you're visiting Borough the "Rose Summer" on Boulevard in Caloocan City. Police said the place is already gaining the notoriety of being a favorite drinking place for thieves in the city. Last Saturday, police arrested Rolly Ramos, 34, after he allegedly robbed a medical student there. Ramos, a graduate of the Our Lady of Fatima University in Caloocan City, was enjoying the night at the resort's overlooking bar when the suspect reached into his bag containing cash and cell phone. Police recovered the items. Before this, several robbery incidents had been reported in the area. Nino Ramirez

Correction please

BOTH sides traveled OC Mukat pits, both cars crashed while out in yesterday's Elders contest. Local representative Gary Bautista Zamora replaced Capt. Omar Manuel Sky (not an actual member of Constantino's District Station 6 in Quezon City because Omar jet boat. We got it wrong. It was Capt. Bhoda Bilang, not Constantino, who replaced Sky (sorry, Gus apologies

RITUAL Along Sgt. Wenceslao Rodriguez stands guard during memorial rites held as part of celebration Sunday of the 57th anniversary of the Philippine Veterans Legion. PHOTO ON PAGE A-10

They refuse to fade away

By Tarra Quismundo

EVEN with a declining membership, the veterans of Freedom fighters refuse to fade away.

The country's retired soldiers who fought in the nation's final battle in the world's most during the World War II, and a number of those whose call of duty brought them to the wars in Korea during the '50s and Vietnam in the '60s, gathered yesterday to commemorate the day when the Philippine Veterans Legion (PVL) was founded.

Throwing wreaths and bars that bore their names, ranks and medals, some 1,000 veterans, with the sons, daughters, and widows of their fallen retired soldiers from all over the country, marked PVL 57th Foundation anniversary at the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office compound in Rosario, Manila, and in the provinces that "old soldiers die, but never fade away."

And for those who have already gone, the soldiers were again stood in attention, rendered a salute, and paid their homage while the band played "Taps."

During the memorial rites, the members reaffirmed their vow to continue fighting for benefits of the war veterans.

Established in 1946 shortly after the war ended, the PVL has been working for the pension and government assistance for hospitalization and burial expenses of the country's war veterans.

Membership had reached as high as 80,000 when the organization was formed, but today only about 12,000 members remain.

Despite this, they promise to carry on their fight for veteran's benefits, one fight that would not be won through guns, bullets and a dawn of night.

Oops, they held up the wrong guy

By Edson Centeno Tandoc Jr.

THEY should have known he was a policeman.

A suspected robber was killed while his cohort was injured during a shootout in Valenzuela City on Saturday when the cop they allegedly held up fought back.

Suspect Jose Quintado, 34, of Valenzuela, died of several gunshot wounds while Rosauro Quintado, 26, was injured and is being treated at the Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital.

Police said the alleged holdup happened about 9 p.m. Salvador Pili (Wife No. 1) of the Makati City Police and a friend were then on board a motorcycle when they were blocked by the suspects, who were also riding a motorcycle, on F. Bonifacio Street.

The suspects then took their gun and ran toward a bakery. They first grabbed the moneybag of Jose, who was in civilian clothes. They then pulled out the wallets of Pili and his friend.

Jose jumped off the motorcycle and ran. The suspects fired at him but missed. One then pulled out his gun and fired back, hitting and killing Quintado.

Quintado managed to run despite being wounded in the shoulder. But Jose gave chase and found the wounded suspect inside a parked motorcycle.

Jose also recovered the watch from Quintado.

Police said several shoulder bags and moneybags belonging mostly to Indian nationals were seized from the suspects.

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METRO

Go shop, it's safe, says NCRPO chief

But Chinoys still afraid to tread outside

By Jaja del Puerto and Edson Tandoc Jr.

"If you [do], always adapt to how far robbers or hard enough without our worrying about getting robbed or encountering criminals along the way."

So, Director Nicanor de Leon, head of the National Capital Regional Police Office (NCRPO), urged Metro Manilans to leave the security problem to them.

"Go out and shop. Let the policemen handle your security," De Leon said during the launching of the Blue Ribbon Customer Assistance Desk at the Greenhills Shopping Complex in San Juan.

The Greenhills customer desk is to assist or prevent robberies among Muslim-owned establishments from becoming as violent as earlier years.

In answering shoppers, De Leon said that the police was on top of the situation, as he also welcomed the highest form of thanksgiving to help the NCRPO secure the streets and commercial centers in the metropolis.

"Allow us and the Muslims to take care of you," the NCRPO head said.

De Leon pointed out the timely deployment and dispersal of a bomb at the Greenhills Shopping Center midnight Friday night.

The way the Eid'l Fitr holiday has been the situation was good that [we] were could secure the shoppers well, he said.

Some members of the Filipino-Chinese community, however, are yet to be convinced of De Leon's assurances.

"We don't feel safe," said a daughter of Dominic Ang Sun, head of the Chinese Action Against Crime.

In an interview with the [illegible] Ang Sun's daughter, who requested anonymity for security reasons, said "It's scary to go out. For all you know, you may never come back home alive."

The young lady added that even the upgrading of police checkpoints had not diminished anxiety.

"Maybe in a few years when checkpoints are visible, that generally, do their rounding," she said.

Loot too heavy, 'thief' falls off wall

IT WAS a pretty robust police threat only to prove tragic.

The body of Antonio John Valentino, 20, was found lying beside an air conditioner just inside the fifth wall of a luxury equipment warehouse.

The conclusion?

He fell off the wall while trying to carry off the heavy metal cylinder.

It might be because police Senior Insp. Rolando Bautista of the Quezon City Police District said Valentino's body, which was lying face down with the head bloodied, was found inside the warehouse compound along Mindoro Avenue at about 5:30 a.m.

Responding officers Senior Insp. Edgardo Bolano of the QCPD Station Women told the [illegible] yesterday that Valentino was probably killed.

The warehouse where he was found was a storage facility for used engines and other machines.

According to Bolano, Valentino apparently took the construction from the warehouse and had tried to get it over the wall.

But because the [illegible] component was heavy, Valentino lost his balance and fell off, Edson Tandoc Jr.

'New' Avenida

EXPECT heavy traffic in San Juan, Manila, today as City Hall expects 15,000 to attend the opening of the pedestrianized part of Raul Avenue.

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SPORTS

Red Star Rising wins PGC

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Trillana colt bags record ₱2-M prize

By Edwin Villanueva

LONGSHOT Red Star Rising outkicked top choice West Bound down the stretch to win the 31st Presidential Gold Cup and the record ₱2-million first prize that went with it yesterday at the San Lazaro Leisure Park.

VIETNAMESE soldiers carry the the Southeast Asian Games cauldron hand it over to the Philippine delegation.

PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee president Cojuangco (third from left) and chef de mission Julian Camacho receive the SEAG flag from Vietnam organizing committee chair Nguyen Danh Thai (second from left) and vice chair Nguyen Quoc Thao. The RP flag (far right) is borne by a paraolympian.

RP bets' SEAG campaign a big success, says Buhain

HANOI—Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chair Eric Buhain has emphatically declared a success the Philippine campaign in the just-concluded 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam.

Crediting the achievement to the athletes, Buhain said the 40-plus gold standard harvest of the Philippines was expected.

"It's a success," said Buhain. "We have achieved our goals, our goals to be exact, and all these were made possible because the athletes sacrificed a lot and fought hard and strong for flag and country."

The Philippines wound up with 46 golds, 54 silvers and 75 bronzes to improve from fifth place earned in Kuala Lumpur in 2001 to fourth this year—four golds ahead of defending champion Malaysia.

Vietnam ruled the games with an overall tally of 158 golds, 97 silvers and 91 bronzes, followed by Thailand with 90-83-58 and Indonesia with 55-68-88.

Buhain also praised the support from Malacañang, saying President Macapagal-Arroyo herself made the athletes achieve their goals in the well-contested games in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh.

"We are grateful for the support of the President and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. They have been the No.1 morale booster of the teams and the Filipino athletes responded well," said Buhain.

Buhain stated that the 40-gold target was exposed because of a monitoring scheme employed by a team of former national athletes, led by ex-judo champion Benjamin Mc Murray.

The team started its task of monitoring the gold potentials in November last year, or just after the Busan Asian Games.

"The prediction was not based on mere bravery," said Buhain. "It was an effort based on a logical scheme. That is why I bravely predicted we would win more than 40 golds."

Acharon were aplenty in the seas, Buhain said, particularly in traditional host rare and cycling which delivered surprise gold medals, and in badminton, where the country grabbed a bronze medal.

Buhain led the last batch of athletes in a chartered Philippine Airlines flight back home last night.

"We are walking on cloud nine. Maraying-amaya kaming lahat para sa mga atleta natin. (We are all happy for the athletes)," said Buhain.

The athletes and the officials of the delegation were expected to arrive at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 10 p.m. last night.

P'tevella praises athletes, Arroyo

BACOLOD City Rep. Monico Puentevella yesterday praised Filipino athletes for placing fourth overall in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam and acknowledged the significant contribution made by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Puentevella, chair of the House committee on sports, said the athletes performed beyond expectations despite problems they encountered during training.

Arroyo, Puentevella noted, almost single-handedly rallied more than of the business community to extend fund support to the athletes.

The achievements of the athletes cannot take and it took the Arroyo's initiatives through private sponsors, it would have been worse for the athletes, the congressman said.

"It's about time we give credit where credit is due. The First Gentleman undoubtedly both moral and financial support to our athletes. Our athletes, for their part, did everything for the love of our country," Puentevella said.

Arroyo initiated a fund-raising drive for the athletes which yielded P22 million in donations by members

He also went to Vietnam to extend moral support to the athletes.

PAIRS wave the flags of the 11 participating nations during the ceremony of the 22nd SEA Games' orchestra's male stadium, while performers (far right) make their final curtain.

Philippines did not have to beg this time

HO CHI MINH—This is the old dragon in South Vietnam, but suddenly it's different country. It's hot, unlike Hanoi.

There's a frantic shriek in the downtown traffic, now bustling with flashy cars, bolting with unsmiling citizens on board commuter motorcycles, many of them riding in some sandals.

The flight from Hanoi was short, less than two hours, but it was a long global leap from winter to stifling summer.

Gone is the cool Fressday air, ordinarily thick in Hanoi, as this capital where America's refriend in biggest numbers day defeat, reunited is lumps up in Yankee color and joy.

This could well be Bangkok, although more orderly and minus the steaming humidity.

Still no hint of flies. But beggars, absent in Hanoi, slowly start to materialize on the sidewalk.

The rumor takes off his jacket and, for the first time inside socialist Vietnam, miles and miles away from Ho Chi Minh's revered grave in the northern side, he chances upon a homeless beggar passing the night underneath a concrete bench at the park off busy Hao Anh-road.

***

It was, of course, not merely by accident that the Philippines, for the first time in many, many years, did not end up begging for gold in the just-concluded Southeast Asian Games.

After a happy harvest of 46 gold medals at the close of competition Saturday, the Philippines was proudly settled in fourth overall, ahead of Malaysia, the overall leader two years ago.

It must be remembered that the Philippines sank ominously to fifth overall in the 2001 SL Games, when our athletes could salvage only 21 gold medals.

It was clear many RP athletes coveted themselves here, mainly in gymnastics and diving, two disciplines where the country captured its first gold medals in the biennial meet. Wrestling also scored big.

If, say, Filipino competitors did not surpass the original target of 46 golds on the set by RP officials, RP would have remained stuck at lowly fifth.

***

Hero "Nano" Sayen was a disaster in the 9-ball pool event finals. Chances got a raw from the sick judges and had no smile for a lone gold, no thanks to the Amateur International Boxing Association's dirty tricks department.

The tennis association won a big shame as it sank to its worst showing in the biennial games. Weightlifting and rowing also failed to deliver.

Happily, big winners, mainly from athletics and taekwondo, far outnumbered those who came here and failed.

There, indeed, were many glorious successes for Filipino participants here.

And, unlike in the 2001 SL Games, RP officials did not have to scrounge and try secret ways in heading home.

For the first time, the Philippine Sports Commission was also reported not to host a victory party here last night.

***

There, indeed, was reason to celebrate.

For one, we did not lose the basketball gold, although the national team was regrouping with members given less than a month to work together and jell.

Imagine if the RP national squad had failed to make up in time and instead got crippled by Indonesia, reached by Bong Ramos, a PBA'ner?

Filipino misery would've been deep, immeasurable.

Look at host Vietnam, which should also be partying after it catapulted from fourth to the top overall with an amazing hoard of 158 gold medals.

Vietnam's sudden football success, mainly the once against Indonesia and Malaysia, became a sensation for national celebration, while the streets roaring with uncontrollable merrymaking.

However, after Vietnam lost in its football finals against Thailand, 3-1, Friday night, the national energy here sank like a deflated car tire.

This city was shrouded in gloom. The old colonial stadium by sunset-falling, flag-waving fans turned into a slow, solemn funeral procession as forlorn natives headed for home.

Yes, RP scene a much up to fourth overall and also kept the basketball crown, its most treasured gold.

Said Ate Chun Sibico, a dedicated volunteer who quietly helped Go Teng Kok's RP athletics squad: "We're proud of our Filipino athletes; they did it despite the absence or late arrival of equipment from the POC. But a big task is ahead. Our athletes could get the greatest motivation to perform even better in the 2005 Games if a town manifests it built in their honor."

As things stand back home, it could appear in the scheduled hosting by the Philippines of the 2008 38th Games that our country, and not Vietnam, had been severely ravaged by war.

There would also be a problem with all our city beggars and how to hide them.

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GAB suspends erring boxing trainer

By Selwyn L. Lagumbay

POR rules empowering himself to the persons of boxer Freddie Ginoy, trainer Dennilo Zaspa was issued a six-month suspension by the Games and Amusements Board (GAB) following an inquiry into the boxer's death last Oct. 27 in Tiles, Zamboanga Sibugay.

The GAB, in an investigation led by Commissioner Emmanuel Palabrica, found that Zaspa fired to Ginoy's parents when he told them that their son would be training for two months in preparation for his fight last Oct. 27 against Robert Guelas. It turned out that Ginoy only trained under Zaspa for 20 days.

In that tragic fight, Guelas knocked out Ginoy in the eighth round. Ginoy lapsed into a coma soon after. He was brought to the Silliman Hospital but was declared clinically dead from cerebral hemorrhage the next morning.

"It was ruled that the death was purely accidental, no attendant negligence on the part of any officials but a clear misrepresentation was established on the part of trainer Zaspa," Mendoza told the Inquirer.

But the verdict was met with skepticism by some sources for what they termed as a "blatant" decision on Zaspa, as well as the blatant disregard of the fact that going into the fight, Ginoy had been winless in his last 15 fights.

Red Star Rising wins Gold Cup, ₱2-M prize

FRANCIS Trillana receives the Presidential Gold Cup from Pampanga Vice Gov. Mikey Arroyo. Looking on is Don Antonio Palmaroso Sr.

The handsome 5-year-old chestnut colt responded briskly to the strong handling of veteran Mauricio Duque to score a half-length victory in the 2,000-meter classic.

"Nag-ehersisyo lang ako at nagpapawis pagsapit ng umaga. Alam ko namumuhi ang lahat ng duling ah (I just played a wish-and-see game and made a move only starting the homestretch. I knew we'd make it because he's running so strongly)," said Duque after notching his first PGC triumph.

Winning owner

The win also gave owner Michael Trillana and trainer Ruben Clar their first taste of success in the country's most prestigious race.

Trillana was represented by his brother Francis, a former Philippine commissioner, during the awarding ceremony.

The younger Trillana could not make it yesterday because he's still mourning the recent death of his first-born child he and wife Ilen named Angelito.

"Di ehersisyo sya sa Korea. Sya si Angelito. Sir's an angel on our side," said Michael, a director of the Philippine Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association (Philtoba), referring to the baby boy who died 24 hours after birth.

A teary-eyed Francis Trillana received the PGC from Pampanga Vice Gov. Mikey Arroyo, who represented new honorary President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"This is a big win for us. Congratulations, Michael," he said. "Lito (Duque) did a great job. I also salute Rafael (Clar) for superbly conditioning Red Star Rising."

Sired by Rhoman out of Korean imported campaigner steel maker-veteran Jim's Choice, Red Star Rising jumped in the middle of the 11-horse pack in the early going before pasturing lying rivals at the backside and settling last eighth on the homestretch.

As Wise Beyond barreled ahead as the home turn, Red Star Rising charged boldly on the outside, setting the stage for the thrilling stretch duel.

"Nako-iz-iz (At last I got one)," guided Clar, a seasoned trainer who took over only recently from Alfredo Abalos, as relatives and friends swarmed around him.

Breeder

Red Star Rising, bred by another former Philtobaan commissioner, Jose "Bebe" Quirino, timed 2:07 over the distance which he saddled for only the first time. It was his fifth win in 13 starts thus far.

Wise Beyond, denied a sweep in the 3000 Triple Crown, settled for P506,000 as he suffered another heartbreaking loss, also under Jonathan Hernandez.

Mitch's Magic (Cesar Domingo Jr.) finished third then came Dikeador (Billy Saburador), last year's winner Two Wheel Lit(Del Zarate), Lyonnais (Val Dilema), Marzelyl Wicket (Pat Dilema), Success Story (Hernando Raquel Jr.), High Octane (Dante Andot Borbe Jr.), Silver Story (Jesse Guyo) and Perfect Storm (Jeffrey Laoli-ano).

Red Star Rising, previously handled by either Virgilio Cruzabra or Jesse Aguila before Duque was tapped, returned only ₱99,900 in sales out of the ₱1,221,567 total.

Meanwhile, Wise Beyo caught Dindanoy at the wire to win the 1Kapeful Stakes, while Storm Dea held off Real Slew to prevail in the Chairman Jaime Zobel and Commissioners' Cup.

Wise Beyo, owned by John Bendoza and trained by his father Rody, produced P288,000, the same amount won by Bueno Sera.

Pat Dilema rode Wise Beyo (Shiloh ran Cool-Palace Heights), while Salvador partnered Bueno Sera (Arvin Knight-Avapartdad).

HONG KONG RACE

French jockey Dominique Boeuf (right) celebrates aboard French-born Value Enchantes as he crosses the wire to win the Hong Kong Vase at the Sha Tin race track in Hong Kong yesterday. At left is third-placed Philip Robinson on British horse Warrsan, and second-placed Christophe Soumillon (pink cap) on French horse Polish Summer.

Hall of Fame female jockey out of hospital

INGLEWOOD, California—Hall of Fame jockey Julie Krone was released from a hospital Saturday after suffering severe bruises to her upper chest and right shoulder in a spill on Hollywood Park.

There were no fractures of her vertebrae or ribs, Dr. Steven Schwartz, an orthopedist at Centinela Hospital Medical Center, added in a prepared statement issued by Hollywood Park.

It was unclear how long the 40-year-old jockey would be sidelined.

In the statement, Krone described her status as "day-to-day" until she gets a more complete diagnosis. She planned to see her personal orthopedic surgeon early next week.

Krone was thrown to the ground Friday during a 7 1/2-furlong claiming race for 3-year-olds and up when her horse, Closer Liberation, collided with Skidoo.

Skidoo, ridden by David Bianchi, had fractured his right fumbig midway down the backstretch and fallen directly into the path of Krone.

Bianchi escaped an injury. Skidoo, a 4-year-old colt, was euthanized and Closer Liberation wasn't injured.

Krone has 3,704 career wins and has been among the leading riders in Southern California since ending a 3 1/2-year retirement in November 2002. She was inducted into racing's Hall of Fame in 2008 and is the only woman to ride winners of a Triple Crown race and a Breeders' Cup race.

Krone has bounced back from several serious injuries during her career, most recently from a spill March 8 at Santa Anita when she broke two bones in her lower back and suffered two compression fractures of vertebrae. AP

SPORTSWATCH

Jeepney, tricycle challenge finals today

WINNERS of the 10-leg series Jeepney King Challenge and the 10-leg Tricycle King Challenge are vying in the national championships of the Jeepney King and Tricycle King Challenge starting at 9 a.m. today at Kart Trak, Bicutan, Taguig. Eighteen Jeepney drivers and 18 tricycle operators from all over the country will compete for the top prize of P100,000 each. The preliminary legs were held in Bulacan, Nueva Vizcaya, Aklan, Iloilo City, Dumaguete, Cabanatuan, Lucena, Olongapo, Naga City, Mandaue City, Iloilo, Bacolod and Baguio. Pilipinas Shell Jeepney marketing manager Jojo Lopez said the final event aims to educate and commend jeepney and tricycle drivers for their safe driving habits, traffic discipline and their responsibilities. Pilipinas Shell chairman Eric Chua will grace the event. Movie and television personality Michelle Dy-Manly will perform during the occasion. Sponsors of the "Humarurong mga Kampeon" rival mega-events are Shell Formula and Shell V-Power Racing. Participate in conjunction with the Pasa Mo Ako! Favorite Dish, Shell Fill Triple Chili and Shell Playing Pasada Club.

Baker surfers top Mabuhay Cup

SAN JUAN, La Union—Earlier than their country, dominated the 9th Mabuhay Cup Amateur International Surfing Championship, one of the country's biggest surfing competitions, held here on Dec. 5-7. Hamid Piao, reportedly from the waters of San Juan only past month to win over 63 others in the 16- to 40-year-old category. Piao, who won the top prize of P10,000, finished ahead of Rio Aguja, also of Baler, who won P6,000. Vyann Lakshmi de Jesus and Anthony Vallejo (16) of Baler placed third and fourth, respectively. The annual contest held at the Solay and Sto. Domingo public shore (10 contestants, including 12 foreigners. Jaeheny Tana and Smith de la Torre also made it into the Baler surfing podium (8 category). La Union's Maria Aquino ruled the women's category, followed by Baguio's Mavel Wada. La Union's Chino Valdez and Baler's Jonathan Mendoza.

Ariel Cinco, PDI Correspondent in La Union

Galas, Abaya cheer rival football teams

PASAY, Philippines—Diamond Security chairman Pedro Galas led a contingent of Filipino-Argentines of the governing team Ex-Navy Academy in cheering for the Navy Middleweight when the latter beat the Army Black Knights from West Point, 3-1-0, to bag the coveted Commander-in-Chief's Trophy at the Lincoln Financial Field here. Galas (USNA Class '45'51), who took the middleweight boxing title during his college days at the Naval Academy, watched from the sidelines with retired Commodore Chuck Agosta (USNA Class '66'69) and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Narciso Abaya (West Point Class '61'). and Jesy Sytoco (West Point Class '69'69) were also present cheering for the Navy Point Black Knights.

Kenko five raps UCM, leads semis cast

DEFENDING champion Kenko Pharex bested a RIM Cooking Coke in the first set, 30-28, to take top standing going into the crossover semifinals of the UCMO Inter-Club basketball tournament at the UCM gym. Coming off a 21-13 defeat to Congo Cafe, Kenko posted a 27-20 triumph in the turn and bounced on strong outside shooting by Fermin Jr. to overwhelm RIM Cooking's opposition rallies. Tia Tet Kenko's offensive with 23 points while Lin Yi-Liang and Elvin Lim chipped in 17 and 12, respectively. Jeff Ingcoran the loser's (Ubayan) top-side figure with 11. Kenko meets fourth seeded Jacobs in the quarterfinals today with the winner facing either RFM or PEL for the championship. Meanwhile, Congo Cafe finished ranked by leading Rural, 80-67. Antonio and Congo Cafe finished with another 0-3 spots but the latter advanced by virtue of the winners over the other side. Antonio beat Congo Cafe, 70-64, in their only meeting in the tournament sponsored by Ron Ruff Banks Linden. UCM Cooking Coal and Ilaw Opa and Ahmad Zaidie.

Fifty fights usher in NCR 7-cock derby

SOME 50 exciting fights are on tap when the second legal Traditional Cockers Association 7-Cock Derby gets under way at 8 a.m. today at the Araneta Coliseum. The 3-round elimination round starts at the noon-hour, with the five-member team of each contestant in the derby are partners Noel Panaligan of Parañaque, Al Magsipoc, Tito Flores of Lolo Cockpit, Edgar Santos and Mayor Mel Fabiola of Pililla, Rizal. The derby's third leg is scheduled on Jan. 25 and 26 and will be hosted by Pres Bonta and Rep. Rudy Albano. Meanwhile, international sweepstakes champ Hard to Be Big Brother is set on Jan. 18, 24 and 25 in the staging of World Master Cup 2004 8-Cock International Derby. The event hosts team representing Jorge "Boxer" Araneta, Rudy Duque, Cris Jay Villarin, Rose Medina of California and P. Bonta are hosts of the sterilizing affair. For inquiries, call 911-2810 and 911-2828.

TEAM THEM YOUNG! Coca-Cola Tigers assistant coach Biboy Ravanes (left) and player Cris Bolado teach young participants defense techniques during the recent Coca-Cola Basketball Clinic at the Quezon Memorial Circle gym in Diliman, Quezon City. The kids were treated to Coke courtesy of the Tigers' unique style of instruction.

CAGE CHAMPS! Philippine Cultural High School principal Emilio Gan (middle) accepts the trophy as Jonas Monroe, co-captain of the PCHS Alumni Basketball Association team, which won the title of the recent Foundation Alumni Basketball Invitational Cup. Hope Christian High basketball mentor, Willie Chan (middle) and Stephen's High coach Cyrene Ching with the champs are school and alumni officials as well as members of the team.

PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee president Cojuangco (seated, left), Pioneer Insurance SVP Ernesto Chan (standing) and POC first VP Jonas Rondonuwu sign the agreement appointing Pioneer Insurance as the official insurer of members of the national delegation who are going to the recent Malaysia Southeast Asian Games. The year-round personal accident coverage for athletes and officials is part of the company's commitment to Philippine sports. Standing from left are Pioneer VP Jerry Valentino and SVP Raul Tolosa.

Ozamiz cagers barge into Final 4

CEBU CITY—Compak-Sidewalk Ozamiz City seized last in the third period to topple Gratibiza-Adamson, 82-64, yesterday and clinch the last semifinal seat of the 2003 Metrocrest-National Basketball League (MBL) Regional Cup at the New Cebu City Coliseum here.

Roger Guerrero drilled in nine of his 15 points in the third period and combined with Edgar Erlanson and Ronald Bordeos in a third-quarter breakaway to put Ozamiz in the Final four.

M. Lhuillier Bicutan Bulldogs Cebu, Bicol Air Stripers and Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo-7 Lakers were the first three squads to reach the semis of the tournament sponsored by Panasonic Phils., Rice na Rice, Salpicio Lines, Batuto's Spring Mineral Water, RF Star Logistics and Modern Basketball.

Compak-Sidewalk-Ozamiz will face the Bicol Air Stripers in the knockout match for the Nat Bankcard at 4 p.m.

The other championship berth will be dispute of by Spring Cooking Oil-San Pablo-7 at 6 p.m.

"We might have played badly today, but what's important is we now have a shot at the championship," said Compak-Ozamiz City coach Fruto Rodriguez.

Deadeye Erlanson controlled the game in the early going as Patrick Cabahug hit 10 of his 13 points in the first quarter to put his team ahead, 20-13.

An early Compak offensive in the third quarter silenced the Gratibiza faithful and the Mindanao crew couldn't get closer than 13 points, 56-69, from there.

Scores:

COMPAK-OZAMIZ 82—Guerrero 20, Bordeos 17, Erlanson 15, Cabahug 10, Flores 8, Rodriguez 6, Tampudo 6, Salgado 3, Fortuno 2, De Jesus 1, Abrematado 1, Dalangin, Bahnot

GRATIBIZA-ADAMSON 64—Flores 18, Cabahug 12, Glenda 8, Dela 7, Tagupa 5, Magbanua 4, Alonzo 4, Pabayanan 2, Tamano 2, Tongco 2, Sandoval 2

Quarters: 31-22, 51-38, 71-48, 82-64

LOVE makes his approach shot on the 18th fairway. —AP

Love builds 3-shot lead in Challenge

THOUSAND OAKS, California—Walking from the practice range before the third round, a fan called out to Tiger Woods, "Go write today, Tiger!"

Woods smiled and said to himself, "How can you win a tournament on Saturday?"

Davis Love III might have shown him how.

With a birdie chance on nearly every hole, Love pulled away from Woods and Jose Maria Olazabal with a seven-under-par 65 at the Target World Challenge by matching the tournament record of 9-under 63 to build a three-shot lead.

"It didn't seem easy, but I hit a lot of good shots and a lot of good putts," said Love, who was at 11-under 205 and in great shape to become the first repeat winner of the event.

It was going so good that when he said Woods sounded like Ulis Haas, Woods mentioned that he was 2 up on Love.

"He said, 'I have that?' I told him I was getting a birdie a hole," Woods said, who had dropped one on shots to Love on the front nine.

It was going so good that when Love made seven a 15-foot birdie putt on the 15th, all he thought about was making his 11th birdie of the day. Instead, his ball caught the lip and went 8 feet by and he missed that one for his only bogey.

"After I sank that, I felt like I could birdie every hole," Love said. "And I almost did."

Love's 63 tied the tournament record set last year by Padraig Harrington, which also came in the third round and gave the Irishman a six-shot lead. He wrapped up Sunday and a late charge by Woods is not to be ruled out.

Love only had a three-shot margin since G.J. Chen (65), although he won't have to worry about Woods.

As most of the leaders were posting birdies on a sunny, benign afternoon at Westlake, the wind was almost heat gone up ground with a three-part bogey on No. 5 and then that his tee shot into the water for a bogey on the next hole.

Woods lost all hope on the third hole, hitting out into open ocean and coming up well short into the water, and he had to make a 15-footer for bogey. He had a 71 and was nine shots back at 214.

"I'm working on a few things in my swing," Woods said. "When I get it right, I hit some unbelievably good golf shots. When I don't, it's 'Rose Left' and 'Sho-t-right'."

Meanwhile, Love played some of his best golf since early in the year.

"I was confident all day," Love said. "I'm getting more and more comfortable playing with Tiger and around the lead." AP

US, 10 other countries vying in jungolf tilt

ELEVEN countries, including the United States and host Philippines, are competing in the Samsung Philippine International Junior Golf Championship set Jan. 5-9 at the east course of the Mimosa Golf and Country Club.

Edgardo Caminada, president of the organizing Philippine Junior Golf Association, said they have lined up activities to make the players' stay in the country both competitive and festive.

The US, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia are all expected to field players in the different age groups.

Entry fees have been waived, even though the event is one of the most prestigious in the region.

Caminada thanked Pearl Wash Golf and Country Club for its support. The tournament also marks the second time that Samsung is the title sponsor.

Junior golfers who wish to join the championships may call Caminada at 0917.8331052.

Chowdry controls amateur boxing

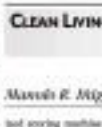
BOXING used to be a sport I hated. Now, I feel utterly betrayed. The way those judges showed their bias in favor of the Thais against the Filipinos in the just-ended 22nd South-east Asian Games in Vietnam was a blatant example of incompetence officiating, a rip-off in the eyes of many, including enraged Vietnamese fans who stayed in protest over the outcome of lately officiating.

It was bizarre. How on earth could five Filipino fighters lose to their Thai opponents in the finals while only one Filipino, light-flyweight Harry Tañamor—won the gold medal and only because he did not have a Thai foe as opponent but an Indon boxer? Singapore also said at least three Filipino finalists—light-welterweight Florencio Torres, pinweight Dennis Maglupay and featherweight Reel Lagatao—could have been the winners but the judges called it otherwise. What on earth is wrong with your judges, Prof. Ayaon Chowdry?

This persistent problem of unfair officiating has remained unabated through the years. What happened in Vietnam was only history repeating itself: a clear case of past and present danger to amateur boxing, heading the aficionados to ask, has Chowdry outlived his usefulness?

Chowdry of Pakistan was elected president of the pan-Asian World Amateur Boxing Federation, which governs amateur boxing in the continent Asia, in 1984 after the Tokyo Olympic Games. He has remained in the helm since then to the chagrin of the silent majority in the association, but he was able to keep the presidency because of his gift of gab. He famously aped as the godfather of amateur boxing. Chowdry did sadly neglect the more than 100-member nations of Asia.

He designed the controversial computer-



CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Mijo

ized scoring machine in the World Championships in Houston in 1 983 to minimize bum decisions in the sport. But instead of helping eradicate faulty officiating, the machine has only stirred world-wide controversy. Some years back, American boxing judge Bill Pierce-Jacks, a 15-year veteran of international boxing, resigned in disgust, saying, "Even by IBA President (Anwar Chowdry)... the ignorance computer scoring system deserves death."

On the other hand, Philippine amateur boxing chief Manny Lopez said he was not about to throw in the towel just because of the debacle in Vietnam. It's time to bounce back from a bitter setback, he added.

"The Olympics next year will be our next target," said Lopez, who is also secretary-general of the Federation of Asian Amateur Boxing. "We are hosting the 2004 Asian Boxing Championships in Pakistan in January and we are ready for that. This ABC will serve as the qualifying tournament for our boxers who want to the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens."

Manny Lopez is dead serious in winning the country's first ever Olympic gold medal by sanctioning a massive grassroots development program together with his father Mel, a former Philippine Sports Commission chair and Manila mayor.

The elder Lopez, also a former boxing association president, said: "We have a lot of young talents waiting to be tapped and harnessed, that's why we are conducting boxing bouts nationwide in our quest for Olympic gold. In the last Sea Games (Developmental Cities)" held in Manila, more than 2,000 boys and girls participated.

Although not much has gone right for us over the past years, still it is only in boxing where the Filipino athletes have won many medals in the most recent Olympic games, to wit: in 1996, Onyok Velasco won the silver medal; in 1948 Leopoldo Serantes won the bronze in Seoul; in 1992 Roel Velasco won another bronze in Barcelona, while Roel's younger brother, Mansueto "Onyok" Velasco Jr., won the silver in Atlanta in 1996.

Because of this, boxing diehards say, "Don't let up sports."

***

REVELATION: Diving emerged as the biggest revelation in the 22nd SEA Games in Vietnam, proving that this is one sport where the Philippines can excel in international competition. Diver Yancy Uy was the country's only gold medalist won by outscoring Seoul hyun Fabrigas amassed that diving is truly unique for the Filipino athletes, a sporting discipline which businessman sportsman Patrik Payot said (weeks before the 40 years left for Vietnam), in the quest to match in the SEA Games. Payot, who is also the president of the Cebu Reef Bounds Inc. being a man of honor. Unlike some SEA presidents who cling to their positions like leeches, Dennis resigned as president of the Wrestling Association of the Philippines when his results failed to win five gold medals in the 22nd SEA Games as he had promised. "Wrestling only won four golds. I have many Red Ounnolz do we have to Philippine sports?

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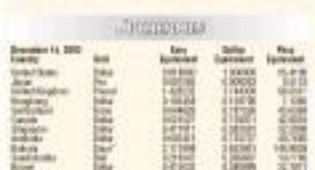
Editor Raul D. Marcelo
Associate Editor Corrie S. Mariano

FedEx staying in RP, plans expansion



WHAT'S INSIDE

- Breaktime / B2
- No Free Lunch / B4
- Cocktales / B7
- Questions of Policies / B8

By Abigail L. Ho

COURIER services provider Federal Express is definitely not leaving the Philippines and has in fact reserved a 50-hectare property in the Clark Special Economic Zone to house a hub that will complement its existing operations in the Subic Freeport.

Clark International Airport Inc. president and chief executive John Henry Yap said in an interview that the Tarlac-based firm was confidently here to stay despite talk that it would be transferring its regional hub to Cebu.

"We've had some initial consultations and discussions with FedEx officials. In fact, they've been here [Clark] twice already to look at the available pieces of property," he told the business.

FedEx contract with the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority for the lease of the property housing its regional hub there would expire in 2047.

The said the courier services provider was looking at building a complementary hub in Clark as it did not have enough room for further expansion in Subic.

However, he said FedEx was not likely to completely shut down its Subic operations as it had already invested a huge sum of money to establish the infrastructure it needed to have a regional hub in here.

FedEx management still has up to 2047 to decide what has to completely consider its regional hub opportunity in Clark or to continue its hub in Subic while also operating in Clark, he said.

In an earlier interview, Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said Alberto Lim, chair of FedEx sub Philippine Interest Antonio 24.00 Inc., even paid President Mora

Food firms buck tariff cover for NSC

By Michelle P. Remo

THREE food manufacturing groups have expressed concern over the possible extrapolation of tariff on sardines in view of the government's intention to protect the mothballed National Steel Corp., whose reorganization is expected to begin early next year.

The Philippine Association of Meat Processors Inc. (Pampi), the Philippine Chamber of Food Manufacturers Inc. (PCFM), and the Canned Oil Sardines Association (Coza), in a letter to the Department of Trade and Industry, said imposing tariff on sardines would result in increased production cost for food processors, which use tin cans for packaging.

"Food products that are seen to increase prices with the imposition of tariff" on sardines include canned milk, fruits, vegetables, poultry, meat, fish and infant food, said PCFM president Bill... Antonio.

Pampi president Felix Tinio, Jr. said the cost of tin cans is already accounted for 15 percent or 20.7 billion of the industry's annual sales. He said an increase in the cost of tin cans would be a heavy burden for food processors and consumers.

"If protective tariffs are applied, our products will no longer be as affordable as they are now," he said.

The move to oppose the possible imposition of tariffs on sardines was in support of the country's tin ore manufacturers who earlier asked the Tariff Commission not to allow the computation of tariff.

Tariff on imported sardines stood at zero percent since 1997, when the NSC was shut down.

Porn of government

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Bernal III

...

...SEC) as the BIR reported that it exceeded in November target, and the (SEC said) it would exceed it at the all-time record.

...

By the sound of their voices in media, with all that good news, the finances of the government, under the new administration of Gloria-mania, must be doing great.

Pardon me, boss, but to be sure time is booked, the budget deficit was still roaring, it was still hovering around P300 billion for the year.

Imagine, the BIR and the SEC are already at their limit, and yet the government is still short by P300 billion. Something must be terribly wrong here!

...

If the BIR and the SEC are getting all the money they seem to get from us, and more, but the government is still broke, I say we have a major problem.

The good news from the BIR and the SEC may not be enough to call for a party. The news only have something to do with the plans of Christmas for 2004.

Whatever the Palace propaganda ace, we just cannot keep on living like this. You know... money collection is or its best with a (P)200 billion deficit.

We have a situation here, and it may be what the former "reluctant" Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho called "the ticking...

...

In short, major problem!

...

TO many in business, when Camacho talked about the crisis, he sounded like a man who was just giving all his best the transition to his old job as finance secretary.

To Camacho (and not only to, of course, but it seemed like he was the only one ready to give up on this country. It's always the first sign of job frustration... surrender.

Still, the highly paid investment banker before he was hijacked/lured into the Cabinet of Gloria-mania, left us a solution a change in the form of government.

Pit-stop food-for-thought from important figures in business. They all agreed with Camacho. That an up-see has to see up-setting. Let's change it.

The way I see it, they were desperate. We are facing economic crisis, a crisis, in fact, and we have concrete problems, calling for extreme measures. Why can just about everybody by the said instead?

...

If the solution is to change the form of government, from presidential to parliamentary for instance, I don't think you pickers in the country.

Recall Barzini, down here in our backyard, the guy was thinking that any system may not work as long as we have the same people running it.

It's like, well, the law and the helpless among us are telling us that, when something doesn't work properly, let's change it, and not to operate.

Sure, the system works in other countries but so, of Asian countries, and so it must work for us. In hope, they also have a term for such a belief.

The system works in other Asian countries because they mostly apply a strong, iron hand form of government called authoritarian discipline in the...

...

HERE, I promise to crawl on broken glass naked, if the law and the brightest can also promise me that the change in the form of government is a cure for.

Let's face it, it's still the leadership, whatever system is in place, which matters most in the development of any country. Emphasis on the LEADER please!

And so, Camacho, explaining his failure in Finance, said he could not get any of his important bills passed in Congress, ergo, the system sucks!

Pit-stop up lobbying that the job of the President is, precisely to serve talk, buy-off, and threat as congressmen into acting or his or her agenda.

And if the administration cannot even work on congressmen to get its programs going, we can say that it must be something is for it pass, using government time and money, or it must be doing nothing but campaigning a lot from the start.

...

BECAUSE a leader inspires people to do something, anything, even die, if it must come to that, and not mind the sacrifice.

I am afraid that we have not been blessed enough to have such a leader throughout our history. It is the only explanation to all the corruption going on.

The example must come from the top, if it does not... well, we can already see the result. Today in this country, nobody in public office bats eyes on kids anymore.

We can just do what you want, and when you get caught, you can run down it, arrange for fight it out in media with a battalion of PR guns.

And if nobody believes this devilish combination, tough luck, you still do not go to jail, and you still get to keep the money you stole.

In business, they are learning for a change in the form of government. I don't know if it will stop the cronies from laughing all the way to the bank in Hong Kong.

...

ALREADY, the good news from the SEC and the BOC might have served to deal with the recent confession of Camacho about the fiscal crisis.

What crisis? Look, the BIR is even overdoing it, and the BOC is even getting a new record. The crisis must be in the mind of some ignorant former Cabinet member? Something like that.

But the coast is real. Based on BSP projection, if we do not do anything about it today, as in, right this minute as we speak, we cannot do anything about it anymore all or (have) none. We will just go down and down uncontrollably.

The worst part is, after that, in only 10 years, we are doomed. We are back to the debt crisis of the 1980s. Nobody will lend to us anymore. Bankrupt.

...

TODAY we can still borrow. Of course we can borrow at highway-robbery interest rates. At least those guys abroad still hope we can get out of this mess.

But government borrows abroad at 400 points above Libor. Computer Site Ayala can get 200 points. Bits of silver has 40(ppt), which can get 180 points.

Now, the government is supposed to be the

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FREE!!! Diabetic Food Plate
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FREE!!! Diabetic Food Calculator
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Serenity
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MOA SIGNING

Left photo: Philippine Serenity Columbarium Vice President Eric Yu shaking hands with Mr. Jose Hernandez, Vice President of Fil-Chilean Management, Inc.'s Marketing Coordinator in inaugurating booklet at SM Mall Asia. Photo, Manila Hotel and Fr. Ariel Pacheco of Tagaytay, Philippines, Dan. Dr. Daniel G. Galang, Chairman/CEO of Cathedral of Praise (COP) Mr. Ramon Yu, Board Member/COP, in the middle, and Mr. Eric Yu, Board Member and CFO of COP and Mrs. Susan Yuen in the...

Our archipelagic economy

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

IT MAY be no coincidence that the two worst performing economies among the five original Asean members (or Asean-5), namely the Philippines and Indonesia, are archipelagic countries. We are a country of around 7,100 islands... plus a few more during low tide, as the joke goes; Indonesia is a country of around 13,600 islands. That we have been able to achieve slightly better economic indicators than Indonesia may be a function of the fact that they have almost twice as many islands to manage and unify than we do.

Having just come from the first East Asian Congress in Putrajaya, Malaysia, last week, it has dawned on me...just as it must have for many other Filipino participants of that conference, how much we have neglected the fact that our country's territory is four-fifths water, and only one-fifth land. And we all share yours, our development planning has been dominantly preoccupied with our land-based resources and economic activities. It is quite likely that the Indonesians have been just as guilty of this, partly explaining the similarity of our initiatives' economic structures.

Peculiar needs, peculiar benefits

It is obvious that a country broken up into numerous islands would require a different approach to development than one with a largely contiguous land area, like Thailand. More obviously, the cost and efficiency of internal transport (i.e., inter-island versus land transport) can be widely divergent. Opportunities for economies of scale in providing energy infrastructure, particularly electrification, are more limited with a geographically fragmented territory. The communication network would likewise be more expensive and probably less efficient in an archipelagic setting. And because of more limited opportunities for direct people-to-people contacts, building a sense of nationhood especially through political and cultural unity is a much greater challenge than in a country with contiguous land territory.

It is not all downsides, to be sure. The seas in between our islands and along our coasts are immensely rich in natural resources and economic value, arising not only from the value of the fishery and other marine resources contained therein, but also from the value of potential tourism and other services (e.g. wind energy) they could provide. It is quite likely that a square kilometer of sea contains higher potential economic value than a corresponding square kilometer of undeveloped land. The challenge is in harnessing the economic value of the seas in a sustainable way, i.e. without depleting marine resources or destroying marine habitats through pollution or outright destruction (e.g. through dynamite fishing).

Multi-modal transport system

There suggest the specific elements that need to be addressed in development planning for an archipelago. First, islands must be interconnected with efficient air and sea transport facilities. President Macapagal-Arroyo's vision of a "Strong Republic Nautical Highway" based on roll on-roll off shipping facilities serving major islands from Aparri to Jolo tries to address this need.

In the 1990s, a general blueprint for a nationwide multi-modal transport system was developed by an inter-agency group composed of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda). The idea was to provide a seamless transport system wherein passengers and cargo would easily move between different modes of transport, say transfer to a railway system from the seaport, and then on to the airport.

Why the original LRT system stopped short of connecting to the domestic airport just a few hundred meters from its terminal remains a mystery to me, and is a prime example of what is wrong with our infrastructure planning. I could not even attribute it to lack of coordination because both the LRT and the airports are under the same government department (DOTC). For the same reason, it is a mental sin that the Manila-Cubao MRT line was not connected seamlessly to the Edsa MRT line in the same way the latter connects to the original LRT line on Taft Avenue.

Our importance

If we truly appreciate the peculiar archipelagic nature of our country, we should have had separate Cabinet-level government departments for fisheries and maritime affairs long ago. As it is, fisheries is relegated to a line bureau under the Department of Agriculture, which has understandably been unable to cater effectively to the needs of the crop and livestock sectors, let alone fisheries. We should also have a separate department dedicated to strengthening the maritime sector covering shipping, shipbuilding and ship repair, among other things—things that an archipelagic country like ours would normally be expected to be inherently strong in.

In a visit to Croatia some years ago, I recall how our hosts proudly described their country as an archipelago composed of over 3,000 islands. And because of this, they said, they had a long tradition in shipbuilding and a very strong shipbuilding and ship repair industry. I was treated around their impressive shipyards, and was struck by an added fact: the country does not even have a domestic steel industry; all the steel that they turn into ships are imported! This reminded me of those who had been arguing that we should have our own integrated steel industry if we are to industrialize. Those were the same people who asked for very high trade protection as well as the expense of the competitiveness (and to the detriment of the consumers) of the downstream industries that had been in place long before.

It seems to me that until we have a clear vision for the country built on a strong recognition of the strengths as well as requirements of an archipelagic economy, we will never get out of our persistent mediocre performance amid our dynamic non-archipelagic neighbors.

Comments welcome at cfhabito@ateneo.edu.

BIR sets 15% withholding tax rate on all professionals

By Cielito S. Batino

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance and the Bureau of Internal Revenue are scheduled to issue today a regulation that will set at 15 percent the creditable withholding tax rate on all professionals earning P720,000 a year starting Jan. 1, 2004, to improve collections next year and plug tax leaks.

But while the new regulation would increase by half the rate on all other professionals currently paying a 10-percent withholding tax, it would effectively reduce the tax burden of entertainers who have been paying a 20-percent withholding tax since September 2003 following a recent ruling from the members of the movie industry.

Sources said that back-channel discussions were made between entertainers and government officials on circumstances including the withholding tax rate in part of reconciling a quasi ethnic to resist the support of the declared incentives of showbusiness.

A source said the lower withholding tax rate could appease the entertainment sector considering that it would reduce their tax burden by 20 percent.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. denied that the government caved in a compromise with entertainers.

"Early this year, we already announced that we would impose a uniform withholding tax rate for all professionals because we [assume] were complaining that they were singled out by the 2003 regulation. This is just a fulfillment of our commitment," the BIR chief told an interviewer.

The government originally planned to increase creditable withholding rate to 20 percent for all professionals starting Jan. 1, but Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong last agreed to withdraw the regulation after conducting public hearings in the last two weeks where professionals, particularly lawyers, doctors and accountants protested in a unanimous that 10 percent would be reasonable rate.

Professionals earning below P720,000 a year would still be subject to a 10-percent creditable withholding tax rate.

"Now, the regulation would cover all professionals and not just entertainers so while the tax was reduced for artists, it would go up for the others," Parayno said.

A withholding tax deducted at source from an individual is eventually subtracted from the final obligation that a taxpayer eventually owes to the government during tax payment season.

The new policy would supplement a BIR regulation issued January that finally imposed the 10-percent value-added tax on professionals and banks, which were spared from the tax since 1996 when all other sectors were required to pay the VAT. Reading before Congress to a law bringing back the 5-percent gross receipts tax for financial sector in lieu of VAT and restoring the exemption of drugs and medicines from the value-added taxes.

SMC sees 10% earnings growth

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elena R. Tevijas

SAN MIGUEL Corp., Southeast Asia's biggest food and beverage conglomerate, expects to end the year with at least a 10 percent rise in profits.

SMC president Ramon Ang told reporters Friday night that SMC's sales were growing across product lines by about 15 percent in volume terms except for bottling unit Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc.

Asked why CCBPI products were not posting higher volumes, Ang explained there were some schools which were discouraging the consumption of soft drinks by their students. He said these distributors kinks should be worked out by next year.

The SMC president said the company should see at least a 10 percent growth in revenues in 2004 with election spending driving a big part of the growth.

Ang also confirmed that SMC was in talks with the Individual group in Indonesia, which is controlling the Indofoo family.

"If ever we will do a deal with anybody in the region it is just purely [for our] acquisition. We don't want to get into distribution," Ang told reporters.

He noted that in 1998, 50 percent of Indofoo was distributed to SMC but the latter rejected the offer.

PT Indofood Sukses Makmur, a trading unit of PT Indofood Sukses Makmur, the world's largest noodle maker, was reportedly approached by SMC to distribute food and beverage products in Indonesia.

"We are not talking but as of the moment there is really nothing yet we can say" he said.

Ang Tan Guy
CLUB SHARES, INC.
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PSE starts trading own shares today; IPO set in '04

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE Stock Exchange starts the public trading of its own shares today, setting the precedent for the listing of company shares by introduction or without a public offering.

That move is in part in compliance with the requirements of the Securities Regulation Code.

The PSE has one year to make a public offering to comply with the SRC's provision to dilute the ownership of the member brokers.

Manuel Turdumulles, president of PSE's listing adviser ATR-Kim Eng Capital Partners, said in an interview that the PSE's book value amounted to P203 per share.

The PSE's 184 member-brokers were given 50,000 PSE shares each to exchange for their seats in the PSE when the local bourse converted itself from a mutually-owned company into a stock corporation in 2001.

Promulgated in the aftermath of the SMC Fraserstown Corp. price manipulation scandal, the new securities law required the demutualization of the stock exchange to prevent any single industry from owning more than 20 percent of trading rights.

PSE president Ernest Leung said the market "would not likely see any sizable movement in the PSE's share price since the shares are kept in the hands of the member-brokers."

ATR-Kim Eng Capital prepared the prospectus for the PSE's listing which would be distributed during the inaugural roadshow, he said.

ABS-CBN not worried about ABC-5

BROADCASTING giant ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. is unfazed by competition from its ex-sister Broadcasting Co. (ABC-5), which was recently taken over by businessman Antonio "Tonyboy" Cojuangco.

ABS-CBN chief finance officer Randolph Jarmillado recently told reporters that the 50-year-old network enjoyed an edge because it had ratings hold over the rival number.

He expected profitability to continue improving next year.

"It will be a challenge for any third network to break the duopolistic nature of Philippine television," he said.

ABS-CBN and Inter-viral GMA 7 had a more fat television ratings, leaving other networks far behind for decades.

He said ABC-5 or any third player would have to invest heavily in infrastructure to pose a significant challenge to the two networks.

Cojuangco earlier said that ABC-5 would compete against ABS-CBN and GMA-7 by enticing the middle class to watch free television.

He said his group was preparing a war chest to expansion ABC-5 as a "strong third" in the broadcasting industry by next year.

Jarmillado, for his part, said advertising growth next year would continue to drive ABS-CBN's revenues, accounting for 75 percent of total revenue. Doris C. Dumlao

LNM Holdings improves offer for NSC

By Michelle V. Ramos

LNM Holdings N.V., the world's second largest steel firm, has renewed its intention to improve its offer to rehabilitate the cash-bedridden National Steel Corp.

The same offer deal steel firm Global Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. said that it expected to soon close a deal with creditor banks and win the right to take over the assets and operations of NSC.

LNM general manager Eric Tiew said the company hoped to have a dialogue with creditor-banks, adding that it was willing to increase its original bid of $9 billion and pay around P2 billion more.

The P2-billion cash that LNM was willing to pay is double the P1 billion reportedly offered by GSIL.

"During the exclusivity, we can end well not (formally) negotiate with the banks because that will be outside the legal scope and we will put them into legal trouble. All we can do is share with them our views on what we are willing to do with NSC in the future," Tiew said in a briefing with reporters.

GSIL was granted last month a 90-day period to hold exclusive talks with NSC's creditor banks after losing LNM's P7 billion bid.

Margarito Teves, president of the NSC creditor Land Bank of the Philippines, said the group of creditor-banks are having a smooth discussion with GSIL, whose latest offer was expected to pay 28 percent to 40 percent of the total P93 billion owed by NSC to its creditor banks.

Tiew said LNM was willing to translate into "hot cash" the participating scheme included in its bid offer to increase the original bid price of P7 billion.

Aside from the actual bid, Tiew said LNM was willing to invest $50 million in working capital—which will cover the remainder of raw materials—and another $20 million for the upgrade of NSC's facilities.

The company official added that GSIL was commissioned to make the NSC fully operational by the end of the first year and raise the original capacity by the second year.

Tiew said LNM was still keen on securing NSC because operating in the Philippines would support its objective of growing to the same region.

He also said the high-quality skills of Filipinos as well as their proficiency in the English language were additional factors behind the company's interest in the Philippines.

NEW ISO CERTIFIED FIRM – ORACLE PETROLEUM CORPORATION (OPC) recently was awarded Certification for ISO 9001: 2000 Quality Management Services with Zero Non-Conformance Report from TUV Rheinland Phils. Ltd. (TUV) Managing Director, Mr. Uwe Rosinger (4th-L), awarding the certification to OPC President Mr. Frederick D. Sy. Witnessing the event is Makoto City native Mr. Josh Rante (OPC Mktg. Mgr.), Ms. Judith Dy (OPC Production Mgr. / QMR), Ms. Bernadette Chong (OPC Lab Head / QA), Ms. Carol O. Sy (OPC Treas.) and Eng. Errol Bacon (OPC Managing Director). OPC is in the business of fabricating oil-blending base oil and additives trading. For inquiries call (02) 299-8100.

FedEx staying in RP, plans expansion

Front page B1

regional division's visit to assure her that FedEx was here to stay.

"Ms. Espinosa initiated a courtesy call to the President and explained FedEx's position to her, that they're going to stay in the Philippines. It's not true that they're pulling out. They're even expanding," he said.

Neville Isdell's admitted that it had already acquired a number of assets [LDE] with the Georgetown airport [where] the firm said this did not mean a relocation of its Asian hub there.

"The LDE is a non-liquids blocking documents, which enables us to gain access to information to expedite us to know the exact details of the shipment so we can expedite both for duty," Stella said in an earlier statement.

"FedEx has an immediate plans to enhance its Asia Pacific hub from Subic Bay, the Philippines. The company has a five-year lease [LDE] 2005 and an option to renew," it added.

Harold FedEx said operating at the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark, it would be doing business in a territory already overpacked by cheap Chinese factories.

DTE chief operating officer Thomas Fredenmeyer said in an earlier interview that the Atlanta-based firm would welcome FedEx's transfer to Clark should it decide to do so.

"Clark provides great infrastructure for logistics companies like the competitor. We'll just wait and see what happens," he said.

Malacañang urges Congress to fast-track tax amnesty bill

By Clarissa S. Batino

BUSINESS is a money lobby from Chinese-Filipino groups, Malacañang has certified as urgent a bill that would provide tax amnesty to persons and companies that have understated their tax payments and, if passed, would yield about P6.4 billion in additional revenue for the government next year.

Pending before Congress is a bill proposing a tax amnesty on all unpaid tax dues up to year 2002. The Palace wants the law passed before the May presidential elections.

Based on estimates made by the Department of Finance and the National Economic and Development Authority, the government could reap an additional P124 billion from individuals and P7.28 billion from corporate taxpayers based on an amnesty rate of 5 percent.

The projected collection from the tax amnesty, however, is nowhere near the estimated P626 billion in potential revenues from 1998 to 2002 lost to rampant cheating of income and value-added taxes, especially among corporations and professionals. The losses were based on a study made by the National Tax Research Center for the DOF.

The one-time tax gains is also lower compared to the P1.4 billion in estimated revenue from the adjustments in beer and tobacco excise taxes that was shelved by Congress. The tax hike would affect big beer and tobacco manufacturers.

The government assumed that only households falling under the income class of P5 million and above and understating their assets by 40 percent would avail themselves of the amnesty while 8 percent of large corporations and 30 percent of small- and medium-sized firms would also take advantage of the chance to clear their past dirty accounts without penalties or criminal prosecution.

Adopting the position of the finance department, Malacañang has proposed to Congress to impose a tax amnesty rate of 10 percent based on an increase in net worth for those amending their tax declarations and 2 percent based on total net worth for those without any previous financial statement with the BIR instead of the one percent amnesty rate in the proposed bills.

Malacañang said it wanted to allay concerns that the rate was favoring tax cheats.

Higher yen, higher prices

If you are still contemplating whether to buy a new car or an SUV, you had better take the plunge and go for it now.

Toyota has already advised its dealers that it will raise the prices for its higher-end, Japan-assembled vehicles after 15 dealerships to reflect the higher exchange rate.

With the yen now hovering at Y108 to $1 from the low-branch Y115-$1, the prices of Camry will be raised by P70,000 for the lower-end model to as high as P120,000 more for the top-of-the-line, 3.4-liter version.

Land Cruiser, Fortuner, Innova and sports-utility-vehicle Prado, both newly remodeled fully built imports, will likewise be increased by P100,000 and P150,00, respectively.

Toyota plans to maintain the prices of the sub-2.0-liter cars because it still the current inventory lasts.

A little tougher, a little later

THE BANGKO Sentral has uncovered a new trail of fund remittances to headache ward, Bistro Filipino.

Bangko Sentral examiners discovered that Bistro Filipino lost more than P1.8 billion in loans in excess of Dean's ceilings to companies controlled by Bistro Filipino's top officers (parents and his successor—a repeat of the tactics employed by the thrift bank during the 1980s that also got itself into trouble with the central bank.

The thrift bank strongly denies the Dean Rodriguez report for the loans extended to two companies controlled by relatives opposition Albert Agustin.

The Dean Jimenez, officers, stockholders, and related interest accommodations were uncovered after the Bangko Sentral conducted a special examination within the thrift bank in October 2003. The internal audit had been undertaken as a condition for the grant of government emergency assistance to Bistro Filipino.

After a year in the intensive care room, the Bangko Sentral's public relations department in late-October ordered the recapitalization bank to reduce the excess loans to within the allowed ceiling and imposed a maximum P50,000 daily fine for the duration of each violation.

Bistro Filipino was given until this week to report its compliance with the Monetary Board order.

Requisite's new baby

VOLKSWAGEN has quietly brought in an initial shipment of Touareg, VW's first foray into SUV. Touareg shares the same platform as the higher-end Porsche Cayenne but not its high-end price. Touareg goes for P4.2 million against Cayenne's P5.6-million.

One of the first enthusiastic local owners is Bistro Serve Rep. Roque Ablan Jr., who flaunts a diplomatic-looking black model as his everyday runabout.

Heard through the grapevine

THE NEWS of Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, Bistro Lapaz, is puzzled why the handlers of Kilke decoys would think she is the reason for her husband's insistence in pursuing the Jose Pidal investigation against decoys Orosbos, Ilpig.

"I hardly know them," she said, adding that she is recovering from breast cancer "and would like to request for some peace and quiet."

Clarissa may be reached by e-mail at cookiebat_pdi@yahoo.com or at cookiebat_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Cocktales

Victor C. Agustin

Relocation problem bugs Northrail project

By Abigail L. Ho

WHILE the trains to be used for the Manila-Clark Rapid Railway System (Northrail) will be shipped into the country by next month, actual work on the railway line may not start until June as the relocation of informal settlers on the site has barely progressed.

Transportation Undersecretary Jose Ortiz Jr. said in an interview Friday that the Department of Transportation and Communications would now have to help the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council relocate these informal dwellers just to speed up the implementation of the rail project.

He said the Chinese Export Import Bank, from which the $400-million funding for the project would come, had agreed to set aside $25 million of the total loan for the relocation of the settlers.

"But nothing will be sacrificed, in terms of the quality of the rail project, even if some of the funds for it will be allocated to relocation. There are three types of contracts that we can use (for the train system), and we'll choose the most economical," he explained.

Apart from finding the required amount to fund the Northrail project, the Chinese government also donated the three sets of trains that would be used on the railway system.

These trains would be shipped into the country by next month, even though actual bidding for the project could start only after all of the informal settlers on the site had been relocated, Ortiz said.

While several parties have expressed interest in participating in the project through funding and financial support, he said none has actually signified the intention to run the railway system as a whole.

"Many have expressed (their interest to participate), but only by providing loans. They don't want to go into operations. They know that our fares are too low. So we (government) come in basically as the borrower on record. The operations and maintenance will be ours, we will bid that out. We don't want to run another rail system. We'll privatize its operations and maintenance," he said.

The Northrail project involves the first-stage construction of a railway line that will connect the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport in Clark to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila through a central transport interchange at Mrt Bonifacio in Taguig.

Phase one of the project will run from Caloocan City to Malolos in Bulacan, a stretch of about 32 kilometers.

The 100-km, double-track railway system has a target completion date of 2008, but Ortiz said the Northrail would likely start operating three years from June 2004, pushing back the target to 2007.

$15-M MWSS bond issue OKd

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE POLICYMAKING Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has approved a P15-million bond issue of the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System, bringing to P150 million the amount of MWSS' borrowings so far around half of the year.

A BSP official said the unsecured water firm has tapped PCIBC Capital Corp. to handle the private placement of the bond issue.

The bonds will not be offered to the public and will be purchased by institutional investors. Proceeds of the bond sale will be used to pay the MWSS' maturing obligations.

Last month, the MWSS issued $50 million worth of one-year bonds to the local market also for its capital expenditures. Earlier, MWSS also secured a $105-million refinancing from Deutsche Bank.

The water firm has to settle P6 billion in debts falling due until the fourth quarter of 2004 that should have been paid by one of its concessionaires, Maynilad Water Services Inc.

Due to an ongoing arbitration case between MWSS and Maynilad, the state entity would have to shoulder the liabilities while the latter was not settled although the arbitration court had ordered the Lopez firm to pay the P6 billion.

Maynilad, a joint venture of the Lopez group and French firm Ondeo Philippines, had stopped paying concessions fees and had filed for an early termination of its concession agreement with the MWSS.

Recent reports said Ondeo Philippines had pulled out of the joint venture and that MWSS and Maynilad were discussing a possible compromise that would involve a debt to equity arrangement.

Cross-cultural competence of OFWs

By Dr. Joyce Mondejar-Dy

[last of two parts]

If our OFWs have proven their comparative advantage in foreign economies, can they be the possible source of the brand of human capital that the European Union needs in strengthening its trade relationships with countries where inherited tradition and cultural differences play an active role in global trade and investment?

Based on the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency report [POEA, 2000], a measly 0.14 percent of the total 643,304 land-based OFWs in 1999 were managers and the figure continued to plunge to 0.11 percent in 2000.

The POEA [April 2003] showed a 5.4-percent increase in the number of deployed land-based OFWs in the entire Europe from 2000: 143,3091 to 2002 (151,162). Significant increases in the number of OFWs were noted in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy (although it showed a decline of 7.4 percent from 21,641 in 2000 to 20,034 in 2002) and England (13,433 or 27.5 percent increase from 2002 to 2003). However, the overall percentage of OFWs to Europe is one of the lowest (13.54 percent) or 568,166 over the total number of OFWs deployed, which is 4,675,556 (Commission on Filipino Overseas, 2003, December 3003).

As to the number of OFWs employed in managerial positions, there was a drop of 5.66 percent from 389 [2001] to 367 [2002] for administrative/management workers; 4.03 percent drop in sales supervisors/managers from 628 [2001] to 595 [2002] and a drop of 17.28 percent in managerial jobs in the catering and lodging sector from 81 [2001] to 67 [2002]. However, no details in the number of OFWs deployed in managerial positions in the EU are currently within access of the researcher [October 2002, Commission on OFWs, Central Bank of the Philippines].

What does are the imperatives to young as well as experienced Filipino management professionals and executives who seek global careers in the EU, considering that there has been a decreasing demand for such professionals?

The following are career imperatives to Filipino management professional and executives who are themselves practicing management in the EU:

- to develop and strengthen an investigative orientation through the ethical application of research methods in addressing business issues;
- to appreciate the unique cultural idiosyncrasies of the foreign country they are in aside from fluency in the language to facilitate understanding and respect (e.g. French, German and Spanish);
- to continuously strengthen and sharpen their technical skills in various management functions;
- to master multi-cultural skills needed to communicate business strategies that respect European culture as well as culture of recipient countries (Philippines, etc);
- to develop valuable brain thinking processes and robust research methodologies for the optimal functioning of the left and right brain neuronal processes needed in formulating robust and relevant business strategies; and
- to work on group facilitation skills that will enhance team building skills in the context of a multicultural workplace.

The author has chosen to accept the current reality of the decreasing trend for Filipino managers and top executives and convert such information into an opportunity to develop a conceptual framework for cross-cultural career strategies in the global workplace that will lead to the publication of a career planning workbook by the end of October 2003.

Dr. Joyce Mondejar-Dy is currently program director of the Master of Science in Management in the University of Asia and the Pacific School of Management [USAP-SOM]. The article is an excerpt of her paper delivered at the 2003 Leadership Workshop for HR Professionals at the Technical University of Schmalkalden in Thuringia, East Germany. It focuses on the deep, underlying factors that contribute to the global employability and cultural competence of OFWs.

Napocor power output in first 9 mos. up 5.5%

By Abigail L. Ho

ELECTRICITY production of state-run National Power Corp. increased by 5.5 percent in the first nine months of the year to 29,447.6 gigawatt-hours from 27,917.4 GWh in the same period last year.

The company's sales and services department said in a report that power plants owned and operated by Napocor accounted for 27.3 percent of total power output in the January-September period at 11,242.4 GWh.

Napocor power plants operated by independent power producers generated the remaining 43.5 percent, or 16,604.2 GwH, of total electricity produced in the nine-month period.

Coal-fired power plants had the biggest share of the pie at almost 9,278.8 GWh or nearly 33 percent of the entire power mix. However, this represented a 20.9-percent decline from last year's output of 11,682.7 GWh.

Geothermal plants were the second biggest contributors, churning out a total output of 7,522.94 GWh or 26.6 percent of the entire generation mix. This, however, also reflected a slight decline from last year's output of 7,643.6 GWh, accounting for 27.3 percent of gross output in the first three quarters of 2002.

The third biggest producers were the country's hydroelectric plants, accounting for a 19.9-percent share of the mix at 5,580.9 GWh. Unlike the coal-fired and geothermal plants, hydroelectric plants actually posted an increase in generation from 4,955.8 GWh in the same period last year.

Napocor noted that natural gas plants posted the most dramatic growth in terms of share to the generation mix, surging to 12.8 percent in the January-September period from only 4.4 percent the year before. Generation almost doubled to 3,576.8 GWh from 1,793.2 GWh in 2002.

StanChart open to amicable settlement of case

By Elena R. Torrijos

URGENT Standard Chartered Bank, which was recently ordered by the Securities and Exchange Commission to stop alleged selling of unregistered securities, has offered an amicable settlement for the dropping of its case.

In a motion filed with the SEC on Wednesday, Stanchart said it was willing to enter into an amicable settlement without admitting any guilt or liability on its part. The foreign bank also wanted to emphasize that the notice and desist order was issued ex parte and before the SEC's compliance and enforcement department could fully hear the side of the bank.

Stanchart demanded, as a condition to the settlement, an acknowledgment from the SEC that, if at all there was a violation of the country's laws, the liability fell on the bank's erstwhile trust department head, Antonette delos Reyes, and not on the bank.

The bank maintained that the CEO was moot and academic given that the bank had already officially withdrawn from its trust clients the option of investing in Global Trust Peso Requited Funds, the alleged unregistered securities, as of November 1999.

Earlier, the SEC ordered Stanchart to immediately cease and desist from further offering, soliciting or selling unregistered securities to the public after the corporate watchdog's investigation concluded that the foreign bank had been engaged in the alleged illegal activity to the detriment of the investing public.

The SEC gave the bank a non-extendible period of five days from receipt of the order to show cause why the order should not be made permanent and to request that the order should be lifted instead. The SEC also directed the bank to state in its request whether it would want to settle the case.

In its motion Wednesday, the bank, which said it had received relevant additional documents only recently requested it be given until today to file its motion to lift the CEO so to amend and supplement its existing motion (has offered the amicable settlement).

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2003 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE Arts & Design

Editor: Cholo Banal-Formoso
Subsection Editor: Lito Zulueta

"HALIPHAL," by Cesy Gobaco

Art shows make a dash for finish line

The art scene takes on a Christmas-y glow, as galleries mount their usual year-end shows

"LIMANAS ng Pag-asa," by Oto Reyes

By Gino Gonzales
Contributor

THE YULETIDE season, Philippine-style, has finally descended on the metropolis, judging from the swish of colorful street décor and the endless throng of shoppers making a beeline to shopping malls and the ubiquitous tsuggies.

The art scene has also taken on a Christmas-y glow, as art galleries mount their usual year-end shows, involving groups in the-moves-the-country fashion, such as the Black Artists Semi-Sheeted, Arte Platicum Group and Platinums.

Among them, Platinums, now on its 11th year and bigger than ever, with two new members to beef up its ranks, has mounted a show of new works (Gallery 628, Ayc Plaza, 6/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, until Dec. 15).

Staging a reunion of sorts at this time of year must have been impelled by the need to commune as a family of artists. There have been few occasions during the year wherein 14 artists of varied personalities, not to mention addresses, could possibly get their act together.

Individually, many of the members have been on their own doing commissioned works and joining art competitions, while coping with the demands of living and their muse. As with the ordinary breadwinner, artists exercise by brush and paint alone. At these hard times, the work must be supplemented by a more remunerating—financially, that is—preoccupation.

Pushing the boundaries

Being essentially landscape artists, Platinums stalwarts like Lito Acuña, Antonio Bandalan, Gilbert Umerenkangan, Jimmy Hwang, Oto Reyes, Mickey Cuijano and Fidel Hamoranos contributed three recent oeuvres.

Though their works are convincing celebrations of their artistic concerns, there is something new in their attempt to push the boundaries of time and place beyond the normal confines of the genre.

Aspects "Bedwinner," Antonnette "Between Sexes" and Reyes' "Umaasang ng Pag-asa" may well augur a new phase in their respective careers, their technical virtuosity enhanced by the rich religious subtext of their images. The last-mentioned work is marvelous in its use figuration of nature's own miracles, the sun's golden rays pouring down a valley like a scene straight out of Genesis.

The Mother and Child iconic figure of which Cesy Gobaco, Bobbie Hubbs and Danilo Sandigo have been identified with makes its 10 figural appearances in the show.

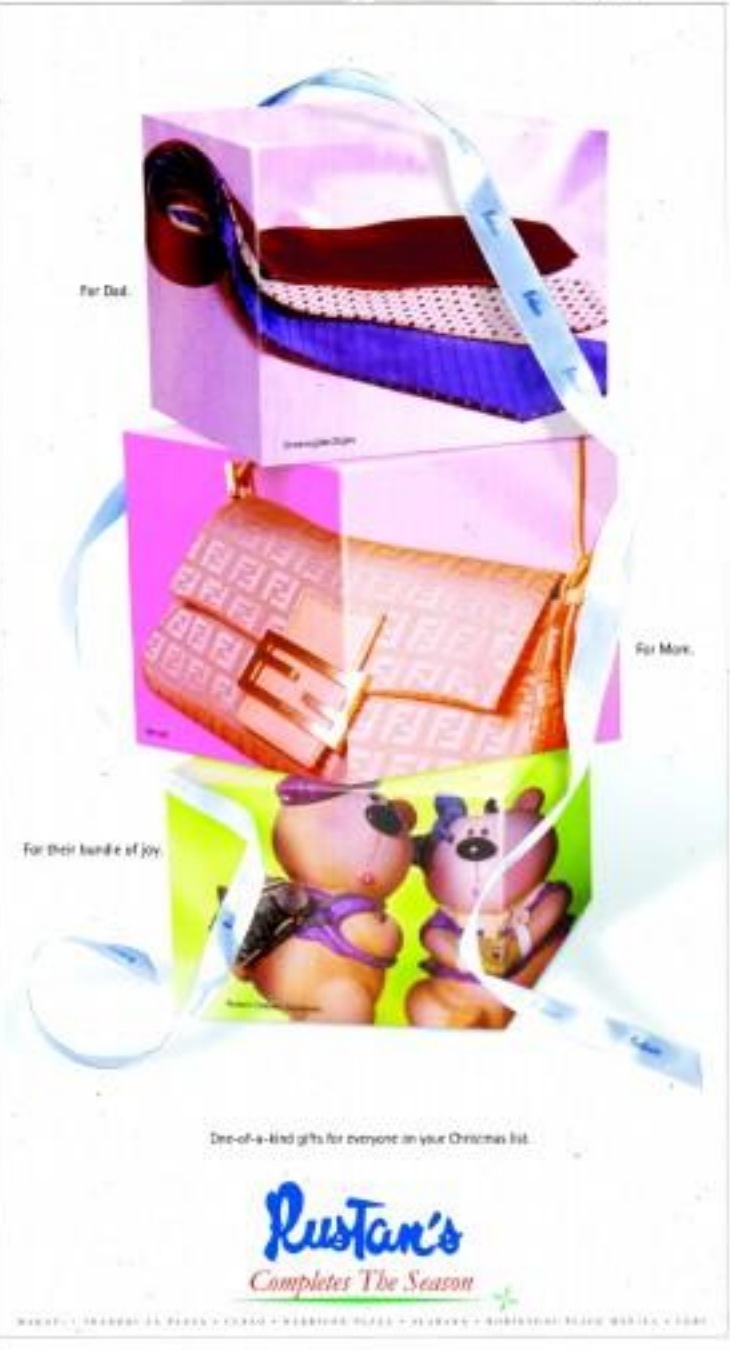
Gobaco is one of the more sought-after interpreters of the theme, like editorial mag-ins in "Vladimirgold" are once again delicately draped in Anghelesque apparel and session with orchid blooms.

More contemporary Pinoy

Dino with Santiago, a professor of Fine Arts at University of Santo Tomas, whose "Halo ng Ina" shows a solitary figure of a mother cradling her infant child, in contrast to Gobaco's rendering. Santiago's has a more contemporaneously Pinoy character.

ART 11

"POPPIES," by Fred Baldovi



"EGG in a Bowl"

The still life as poem

By Constantine C. Tejero

"CHAIR"

"LANDING"

"VESSELS"

"THREE"

Visit museums, may influences dit rila se work ka. "he says.

Study is brown

This eskelet closely follows Leslie's show "Objects," but monochromatic treatment of the human form consisting of closeups of nudes and body parts, bold in tender Paint fashion a few months ago. For this show, he used a blend of raw umber and Prussian blue, producing a cool hue that's close to slate green.

In his exhibit, the artist rigorously defines the subtle nuances, gradations and carbon tones of browns, produced by his subtle juxtaposition of pseudo blending of raw umber, burnt sienna, yellow ochre, vitalit blue. This is often accentuated by a greenish tinge or gray shading.

The six pieces, sketch in a warm monochrome that...are studies in parallels and contrasts of straight lines and regular curves, and the relationships of objects to space and to one another.

Here, the still life ceases to exist but the predominant atmosphere is one of gravity. Each piece is a study in composition, in structure, perspective, color tones, but the humble objects depicted are glass, cloth, stainless and humans that the viewer approaches each canvas with a kind of hush.

"Vessels" has two cylindrical canvas receptacles, one barely discernible from the other, while "Three" has two circular dishes and a freehish picture frame partially cropped out of the pictorial frame.

"Egg in a Bowl" is a close piece of organ forms. It leaves curves upon curves, of the half-open egg, the bowl's rim and base, and the table's edge.

Perfect geometry

"Air" is a perfect geometry of lines and angles, surfaces and solids, points. And so is "Landing." The torn-cloth jut and the mountain travel have positioned in a box fashion, and on one side of the respective pieces, and the rest of the canvas is filled up by the color planes of sand and ground.

The artist says he particularly gives importance to the texture of the background. The intention is meant to provide "inviting space for the viewer's eyes."

The technique is repeated in "Chair," but here the harmony of wall and floor seems to compete with a strong light source overhead to harshly expose the bottom thirds are so that it appears too stylized, as if it were a human form sculpted to the floor and yanked to the wall, resecting in a corner.

Leslie writes a common object and gives it the poetic treatment. He draws realistically and composes without pretentiously, such as visual juxtaposition or transcendental floating, but he sets these lines objects against human wall, ground or table so that it grates the object there's floating.

Leslie's art then is one of poetic realism, freeing the world to a vase, bowl or bare wall, of course, the smell of poetry.

Such a curious appreciation of ordinary things often ignored by the uninspiring vision indicates a deep apprehension of life. And here, in each piece, the still life artist has created a perfect poem.

Fun and color at ceramic studio

SINCE the opening of the first Color Me Mine Philippines in Shangri-La Plaza Mall in 2001, a good number of people have flocked to this fast-growing paint-it-yourself ceramic studio to experience the "art of having fun."

Office executives and other professionals, showbiz personalities, political luminaries, famous athletes, established and upcoming artists, little kids, students and whole families take time out from their busy schedules to step into a new world of fascinating color.

Color Me Mine is all about fun and expression in expressing one's thoughts and feelings through painting on a ceramic piece.

There are not confined to any rule. The shop features that whatever steps to try it but an artistic talent working is to tapped.

Owners and architect Bart Aguas, who has made Color Me Mine studio at the Shangri-La Plaza Mall one of his students, of kids (and brothers) can get inspiration from the many things that occupy our daily lives every day.

Aguas, who doubles as a teacher at the studio when he has time to spare, says that the hour and soul of a person are connected, and they move the hand to embody certain thoughts and control lines to form whatever that person desires to express through his or her art.

At Color Me Mine, every piece of painted ceramic becomes a labor of love by its maker. They come to be more than...and become treasured to be treasured.

Art shows make a dash for finish line

From page 1

"HORSEMEN," by Noel Casumsan

Salvador Casumsan, the newly elected president of the Saturday Group, has his usual abstractionist image of carnivalesque shapes intermingling with an array of geometric forms. "Rare Earth," the noticeably mounted work, introduces Casumsan's preoccupation with a post-Industrial Age subsequent in a sea of metallic shapes.

Noel Casumsan's "Cosmic Landscape Series" and "Wonders" are largely contrasting works but both showing the remarkable multidimensional talent at work. The latter piece, with three varied full-blown petals rising from squiggly stems, subtly welcomes with its wide-open charm.

The two giant mermaids could have well in found seen blend with their culturally different approaches to figuration. Demo de la Cruz's "Smiling Village" is a striking series of portraits of a solitary young boy caught in the cycle of dream and reverie, emblem of the collective unconscious of a generation continued to unfold in successive galleries.

Noel Casumsan's "Mysteries" is a satisfied interplay of the much made famous by the artist Mardelagos festival. Still delineated in the style of transparency exhibit and before pop-art motif by Simmonds, the piece is an Filipino-archetype that reveals complex today.

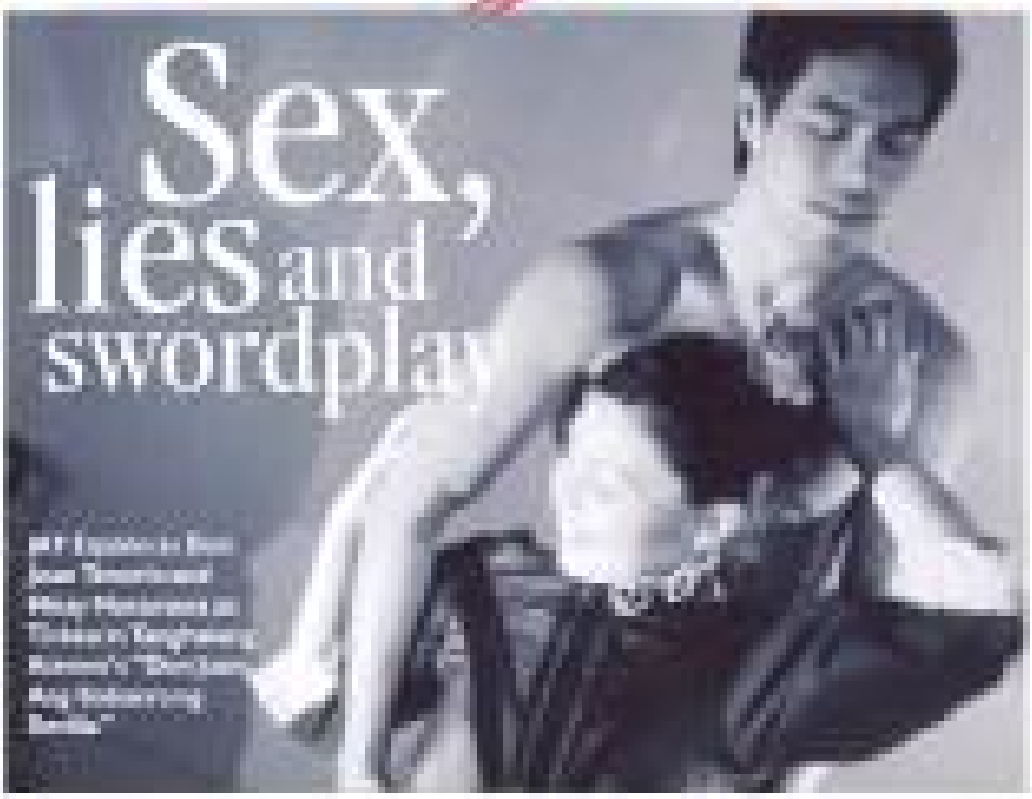
Indeed, just like the necessary Filipino celebrate Christmas—a confluence of historic roots, religion and revelry...shows of Philippine art can be viewed through the canvases of artists who have managed to retain their unique individuality while embracing the contemporary spirit.

"BARACAY Scene," by Noel Casumsan

"SABUNG Village," by Demo de la Cruz

THE CITY

LIFESTYLE



Sex, lies and swordplay

Jeff Eguilos as Don Juan Tenorio and Mitzi Montenegro as Doña Ines in Tanghalang Ateneo's "Don Juan Ang Sobrenteng Bente."

By Walter Ang
Cebu Daily News

Molina's 'Barber of Seville' is recast in the vernacular, highlighting age-old questions about mores and manners

IN THE 1600s, there was no television, radio, internet, or MMS-capable cell phones. So it's not surprising that the comedia (which referred not to comedy, but to a drama or play) performed in public squares and marketplaces was all the rage.

It was easy to please audiences then with slice-of-life portrayals of good triumphing over evil, with plays such as Tirso de Molina's "El burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de Piedra."

But in today and age of MTV images and techno-gadgets, how can a storyteller-director possibly play about a womanizing lover who gets his just deserts (and not) and remain fun or relevant or even audience?

Tanghalang Ateneo attempts an answer with "Don Juan Ang Buhawi ng Sevilla," a translation by Salvador Molly Jr.

Part, it brings in National Artist Lee Theater Design Salvador Bernal, who also wrote a fitted presentation for the homegrown stage of the Arete Theater on the Ateneo campus.

Opening about a third of the stage, Bernal's façade focuses the action toward the center. In this set, there are motifs of wings and an enormous silvering eye high above the stage, a reference to the devilish tendency but eventually-yielding nature.

Then, there's Pascale Arnal fills the space with lots of action. The Tanghalang Ateneo movement and dance director creates the audience with dancers darting in and out of scenes, elegant partnering for drama, and actors who have very large movements and walk about a lot as they express their lines.

As Don Juan encounters various women after another and sidesteps the consequences each time, Bernal's large set pieces move about to create different looks.

There large curtained walls and two side ones become the interiors of a house, the side-

SEE 11

Grand dame gets her due

'Salamat sa Musika' was a fitting tribute to Maestra Andrea O. Veneracion, National Artist and founder of the world-renowned Madrigal Singers

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

TRIBUTE could not have been a more fitting title than "Salamat sa Musika" for a musical revue held in honor of National Artist for Music, Maestra Andrea O. Veneracion, the country's grand dame of choral music.

The homage was given on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Philippine Madrigal Singers (PMS), which Veneracion founded in 1963.

Indeed, it was her compelling passion for excellence in choral music that made her a towering figure in the musical concert stage both locally and internationally.

When she was named National Artist for Music in 1999, the nation formally recognized her many achievements that catapulted the country into international recognition.

When she bagged the award, it was just a couple of years after the PMS had won the 1997 Grand Prix Europeen du Choral Competition in Rouen, France, supposedly the Olympics in choral competition.

Four before this, Maestra Veneracion had led the PMS in garnering top prizes in many international competitions, in places such as Spittal, Austria; Arezzo and Gorizia, Italy; Stockerau, Austria; Ireland; Debrecen, Hungary; Varna, Bulgaria; Tolosa, Spain; and Hindenburdorf in Germany.

Of course, the distinguishing mark in all these performances is the Maestra touch that had not vanished all through the years, and had, in fact, intensely glowed somewhat.

The choir she has led, composed of around 20 choristers each time, has changed its members in many times, yet its sterling quality, described as "the most beautiful sound on earth," has been consistent all the time.

It was because the venerable maestra had breathed unwavering excellence into the choir that it became unmistakably her very life. Sound musicianship, firm determination and perseverance, and, above all, her endlessly consuming love to make the PMS an excellent choral ensemble.

Auspicious

The musical revue held in her honor was not limited to just a choral production, but was a total theatrical show, which made it doubly enjoyable.

Ryan Cayabyab's "Salamat Isa," composed in honor of Veneracion, was an auspicious opener. It was followed by the attractive staging of the current PMS and the composite choir made up of former members of the PMS from the 1981, 1989 and 1997 batches, with Mark Anthony Carpio leading the current batch.

The members rendered were lifted from the repertory of songs the Madrigal sang in competition. Dominique Cordero's "Ugoy ng Duyan" was followed by Jose Mari Velez' "Ako Ay Pilipino" and Lucio San Pedro's "Bahay Kubo."

NATIONAL Artist Lucrecia Kasilag

ably the vocal productions carried the lesson many of choral eminence.

A moving portion was the "Salmo Kanta," where the maestra's daughters, Chiqui, Pearly and Libay, and her granddaughter Emmanuelle, poured out their hearts in singing prayerfully.

Then, women glorously affirmed the saying "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" as they each proved to have rightfully taken after Maestra Veneracion's musical talent.

Former Madrigal singer Amel Ignacio broke the seriousness of the presentation with his comic antics, raising his lines with convincing wit and intelligence and bringing the entire house to uproarious laughter.

To make the production complete, choreographed numbers of Tony Fabel, Jr. were handsomely executed by Ballet Philippines.

The Streetboyz impressed the audience with their breakdance dancing. When the two groups fused their talents to interpret "Sampu Isa sa Sampu," the number was simply amazing.

The finale, "Isang's Wala Nang Sinkee," conducted by composer Willy Cruz himself, and assisted by some ten conductors from the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, was a telling allusion to the continuous choral excellence.

Indeed, Maestra Veneracion has done her part in blazing the trail for classic excellence in this country which has made choral singing a part of the living music of Filipinos.

Such a tradition surely must not come to a stop. Rather, it must continue to reverberate to bring the eternal joy and beauty of choral music to this land and beyond.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers will perform on Dec. 16 at the CCP in "Breath of Christmas," a show organized by the CCP and the Rotary Club of Pasay Silangan for the benefit of the UP-PGH Pediatric Ward. Call 8321 1125 for tickets.

MAESTRA Andrea Veneracion with CCP president Nestor Jardin

NOT all the scenes in the play are large and noisy. The production provides studies in contrast with light, intimate moments.

Sex, lies and swordplay

Entertainment C2

walk of a wave, and a whole menagerie of other settings. These pieces do not move automatically as you would see in an expensive Broadway production. But they cleverly fall into place "mano-mariorally" as local theater practitioners put it endearingly maternally operated by the cast hidden in the shadows.

Cheeky exposure

With all these hefty components helping literally move the action along, we also have a very hefty Joy Espada playing Don Juan.

Don Juan is, after all, a sexual fiend, as there are plenty of scenes where Espada makes off his shirt to reveal his pecs and six-pack abs glistening in the light. To the delight and awful shock of the ladies in the audience, there is even one scene with some "cheeky" exposure.

Unraveling the sexual undertones of the script does not end there. We have lights humorously mess with their long, soft mouths. Not the usual clumsy serendipity-one sees onstage, though, these actors pull off believable scenes under the guidance of fencing master Walter Torres.

Then we have the lowest denizens of the streets, also designed by Bernal, constantly reminding us that Don Juan's morality stands such to reveal the sinners's issues but very real sexual desires.

And, of course, we also have the scenes choreographed by Bester Santos. Eighty acrobatic are are Don Juan dragging his ladies off into the stage and ending up in some very contorted positions.

Contrasts

If there is a lonely leading man for the women, the men also get treated to beautiful leading ladies.

If you keep your eyes open, you can catch the fierce Wilhemenian beauties in the cast, as well as the swirling Mary Magdalenes as one of Don Juan's victims, the Bakawanian Tatiana.

Maricaban's theory soon commands attention as she delivers her lousy and catchy monologues. When Tatiana realizes Don Juan's deceit, Maricaban erupts like a volcano and lets loose a fire-and-brimstone speech complete with choreographed topography.

However, not all the scenes are large and noisy. The production provides studies in contrast with light, intimate scenes.

Pat maintains an attentive of the comic timing of Ogie Alcasid sound-alike Declan Mendiola E. dressing Marlene de la Rosa, and Joseph de la Cruz, playing Don Juan's sidekick/conscience Catalinon.

In the scenes where Don Juan pays us his scenes, the set design is soundly demarcated and busy, mirroring his flowery and twisted lies.

In contrast, when two women left miserable by his duplicity are their getwarers, the stage is stark and empty. Just like a heart betrayed, it is filled only with blinding white angst.

This angst builds into a milestone force near the end of the play when the victims come to collect from Don Juan. Due to time limit, only two get justified.

Don Juan ogerly breaks the rules of society and civility to act on his lust. The women, however, must break rules of society to act on them. If they are all breaking rules, anyway, is it really just a matter of not getting caught?

In the question, then, just a matter of personal free will versus social obligations? Will a 17th century play lend a 21st century audience to ask, paraphrasing the title of a reality TV show, Whom should I do it, anyway?

Call Jinghoking Asmoor 4264883.

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Science City is also a cradle of arts

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

GIVE its third chance anniversary the Science City of Muñoz in Nueva Ecija celebrates not with orchestra selections but unconventional ones.

Muñoz is one of the few places in the country where the cultural renaissance is led by the mayor (no, the Science City does not need an arts council where factional—scientist for the arts—is the order of the day).

Mayor Stella Alvarez led the city's celebration of its anniversary. The Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra and the city's 100-member choir joined soprano Rachelle Cornelio in a mass singing of Christmas carols last Friday.

The University of the Philippines Concert Chorus participated in the festival of voices last Saturday and on Dec. 11, the Philippine Ballet Theater staged its new piece called "Sayaw ng Buhay."

What I find unique about Mayor Alvarez's cultural initiatives is that appreciation for the arts is not limited to the city's elite. Last August, when I brought Cecile Licad for the opening of the Grand Center, I noticed the attendance was dominated not by seasoned music aficionados but by kindergarten tapsilan and their concert aunts.

That first Licad recital in Muñoz had a cosmopolitan setting at the Philippine Science Center's theater since half but a barrio fiesta look, especially during the reception. That was the first time I saw Licad relishing dinner with barangay officials.

Even the mayor's household helps—who prepared an excellent spread for guests—got a command performance from the pianist in a newly-renovated upright piano.

But all is suddenly affinity with the arts (that is a science city remember), the performing arts thrives in Muñoz, a classic example of how the arts relate to various sectors in the countryside. Mayor Alvarez is showing that art is definitely not only for the elite.

The mayor admitted it was difficult at first, but as audiences grew and appreciation increased, the Muñoz folk realized the arts could actually enhance the quality of their lives.

Here, the arts are not a status symbol; it is part of their day-to-day existence.

Last August, I got Francis Xavier messages from Licad fans in Cebu, Bacolod and Davao asking what I was doing in Nueva Ecija and why I dared ship their reat where they had mastered music lovers awaiting the pianist just as eagerly.

Well, in the Science City, you don't have to persuade the top officials to allocate five thousand pesos for their treasury. In other places, you hardly see town and provincial officials attending concerts, and you have to beg for sponsorship. When you can't find sponsors and special patrons, you end up paying the artists yourself.

An impressario's work is complicated and hard. Classical music is the hardest item to sell in this country, so when people make it a little easier for the hapless messenger of classical music, you watch how your chances of their kind in the rest of the country.

Of course, you get annoyed when the mayor's President tell me the red carpet for the likes of Jerry Yan and Wendy Moore and, at the last minute, skip a local concert after presidential dogs had stalled for bombs at the Philamlife Theater. You get irritated when the Presidential dogs a gathering of the mayor's leading ardentists is attend the premiere night of a Cuela Capuno movie.

But in Science City, the classical artists reign supreme. They don't have to compete with Movie and Yen, and, well, Capuno.

Here and there

The ordeal of violin prodigy Isabel Jimenez in the hands of negotiators of the National Music Competitions for Young Artists on Saturday (Certified) maestros Dom (the DP College of Music), whom he played with a Casio portable piano, did not end in Malolos, Bulacan. It also happened in Guiguinto town and other outreach destinations.

The situation surpassed what the Casio pianos stopped working and the poor violinist had to play the Rimsky arrangement of "Ten Kabuhayan" a capella.

If the organizers were not inanimate, you would forgive the oversight. But with decorators in mechanical hare lines the floor to know a violin needed a decent upright or baby grand and not a toy piano. Nanoys has a budget for recycling except for piano rental and a piano tuner.

Opera singer slain

Another recent victim of violence was a Timoy businessman who was an opera singer. Anthony Uy was shot, along with his driver, by men on motorcycles after withdrawing money from a Mandaluyong bank. He gained away Chaos before after the shooting, for the driver survived.

Try tong Phoberman in the concert version of "Madama Butterfly" at the National Center of the Hallyu-pinas in the early '80s under the baton of the late Redemptor Romero. I last heard him sing in the wake of Maestra Herminia Mañalac Santiago in June.

Books LIFESTYLE

"MYSTIC River" novelist Dennis Lehane and Director Clint Eastwood on the set.

The prize-winning novelist behind 'Mystic River,' Dennis Lehane, talks about writing, Clint Eastwood and seeing his novel transform into a buzz-worthy movie

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

'Mystic' writer

By Rod S. de Vera

WHILE it would be a lonely experience for any author to see one of his books distilled into the silver screen, it must be an extra lonely experience to have it done by a cinematic icon.

We to hear novelist Dennis Lehane talk about it, he really doesn't regret it at all.

"It didn't really matter to me," he says in his e-mail to the Inquirer. "Hollywood has a pretty bad track record when it comes to adapting books, so I was never in a rush to see them turn one of my books into a bad movie."

Fair enough, because Lehane, who had won acclaim for his eight novels, got a pretty good deal. The movie was to be directed by Clint Eastwood and would feature the formidable trio of Sean Penn, Kevin Bacon and Tim Robbins.

"It's wonderful. I wouldn't have sold the rights to anyone but Eastwood. I like that his films are a little longer than the norm; he takes the time to delve into characters and place before he lets the plot take over. He respects the audience's intelligence. As for the cast, if someone tells you Sean Penn is going to be the lead in a film adaptof Your book, trust me, it will make you happy. He's the best film actor of his generation. And the rest of the cast is an awfully talented group as well," he says.

Childhood secret

"Mystic River" tells of a childhood secret kept by three friends: Jimmy Marcus (Penn), Sean Devine (Bacon) and Dave Boyle (Robbins). Years later, that secret rears its head again when Jimmy's daughter is murdered, detective Sean has to investigate it and Dave might be involved.

Dark, gripping and heart-wrenching, "Mystic River" was a hot property as a novel and now, in this movie adaptation helmed by Eastwood, is generating considerable awards buzz.

Though the main characters in "Mystic River" are very close childhood friends, friends who grew up still very connected to

(CONTINUED ON PAGE C2)

(Right/top) Sean Penn, Tim Robbins, Kevin Bacon and Tim Robbins star in Clint Eastwood's critically acclaimed drama, "Mystic River," based on the book by Dennis Lehane. The film also stars Laurence Fishburne, Marcia Gay Harden and Laura Linney.

'Mystic' writer

Turn page C5

such riches at a later age, Lehane explains he didn't have a direct experience of it.

"I'm still close to several people I grew up with but, no, I never lost a child or murdered or suspected a friend of mine killed someone."

In fact, he argues that "Mystic River" is not autobiographical at all. "When I was young, I had a fight with a friend and was picked up by the police and driven home and neither myself or my friend thought to ask to see the officers' badges. This horrified my mother, and she swore I looked back on the incident as I grew older the same I thought, 'What would have happened if they weren't police?'" That question gradually began to obsess me and that's what inspired the novel. Beyond that, though, it's pure fiction."

He estimates it took him about two years to complete "Mystic River."

"By the time I sat down to write it, it had been germinating for six years, and it had become quite personal to me. I didn't want to make any mistakes, so I probably put too much pressure on myself. I wrote 300 pages to get the first hundred of the book and threw out the other 200. That wasn't easy, believe me."

Ego-less

Eastwood, Lehane says, kept him involved during the adaptation process, something the author appreciates.

"Eastwood and the screenwriter, Brian Helgeland, were terrific about keeping me in the loop. For more than I ever would have dared hope. So I was consulted, I was involved in minor tweaking in the final stages. It was great. Eastwood is ego-less when it comes to the work. What I mean is that he's got a big enough ego to have his own vision and interpret for the work and person is from the backlog of others who don't belong, as it should be. But once he's satisfied that it fits his vision, he's more than open to living in the other architects—in this case Brian, chiefly, and me, to a far lesser extent—to help him solidify it."

It has been a strange ride for the Boston-based Lehane who has kept some pretty odd jobs on his path of being a writer. Besides substitute teacher, he had stints as a waiter, a counselor for mentally handicapped kids, limo driver, even a bookstore clerk. His favorite job was as sparring valet at a Ritz-Carlton.

"That was a lot of fun," he says.

Yet what he has always wanted to do is write, something he hopes to keep doing for the rest of his life. "I'm not very good at anything else," he says.

Lehane, in fact, has some very old school habits, like listening to the right mood music when he writes. His most beloved habit, however, is not like his fiction in long hand.

"It has something to do with the smooth rest of it, the flow of the pen across the page. Writing directly onto a screen makes me feel self-conscious. The words seem too public somehow, not entirely mine anymore the way they are when they're spread across the pages of a legal pad in my ugly scrawl."

In the middle of all this Hollywood hoopla, Lehane is steadfastly maintaining his usual schedule, living life the only way he knows how.

"I write, I read, I imagine things, scenarios, characters. I watch a lot of movies and play pool and watch and spend a lot of time with my dogs and my friends. I'm a pretty boring guy."

Is there already something coming up for him? "Yes," he answers, "I am working on something but all I'll say is that it's set in 1919. I'm superstitious about discussing work before it's done."

It is so easy to forget in the media mad-

Turn page C6

Be in control with yoga

POWER Books Specialty Store introduces "Yoga For Slimmers," a groundbreaking regimen that helps stop the endless cycle of weight loss and weight gain by letting you take charge of your body, eating habits and attitude. It focuses on the gentle Hatha yoga technique that can be practiced by anyone. It balances the body in order to gain optimum health, fitness and confidence.

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